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SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALS LEADING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN OVERSEAS SCHOOLS EDUCATING A LARGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH MILITARY PARENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

School improvement is a hotly debated topic for school staffs and leaders. Over the past few decades, many models for school improvement have emerged, each determined to increase student achievement. Worldwide, schools have had widely varied levels of success in implementing school improvement plans. This study specifically focuses on school improvement efforts in schools educating a large number of children with military and qualified civilian employee dependents stationed overseas.

A qualitative case study format using multiple data sources was used in this study. Perception data were collected through interviews and observations of three successful principals in selected schools within one district. The data were triangulated by an interview with the district superintendent to enhance information about his expectations of principals as leaders of school improvement. Additionally, artifacts from the schools, such as professional development day and faculty meeting agendas, staff development plans, school improvement plans, and standardized assessment data were collected. Analysis of the data addresses the research question of "How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools serving a large number of children of military parents?" The results of the study produced recommendations for leadership training of principals in the district. While these results primarily show what we can learn from school improvement in this unique overseas school environment, its implications can

be broader for American schools as a whole. The study will also produce recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

As an introduction to this study, Chapter 1 will provide the background for the study, explain the need for the study, introduce the research question, provide the definition of terms, and finally summarize the chapter. The chapter will introduce the reader to terms and the unique environment of this school system.

Background for Study

In a 60-year history of educating the children of civilian and military service personnel abroad, this system has built a reputation for quality education. There are currently over 200 schools operated by the system in 12 countries, seven states, Guam, and Puerto Rico. While the locations of these American schools are literally spread across the globe, commonly held expectations of continual improvement and system-wide accountability urge progress and student success. At the core of this success for students is quality instruction based on best practices and effective leadership throughout the organization.

At the request of the school system, its identity has been masked in this dissertation. Year after year, the school system, educating large numbers of children whose parents serve in the United States military, celebrates standardized, norm-referenced test scores well above the national average. Students in grades three through 11 participate in the testing process. The tables that follow display 2007 *TerraNova, Multiple Assessments, Second*

Edition (Table 1) and 2005/2007 NAEP (Table 2) scores in support of this claim.

Table 1

2007 System-wide *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessment Results

Year	Grade	Number of Students	Reading	Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies
2007	3	7824	60 %ile	64 %ile	65 %ile	69 %ile	64 %ile
2007	4	7176	65 %ile	66 %ile	66 %ile	65 %ile	69 %ile
2007	5	6827	67 %ile	68 %ile	65 %ile	66 %ile	64 %ile
2007	6	6434	65 %ile	66 %ile	69 %ile	67 %ile	68 %ile
2007	7	5796	62 %ile	71 %ile	66 %ile	64 %ile	62 %ile
2007	8	5435	69 %ile	67 %ile	68 %ile	66 %ile	65 %ile
2007	9	4723	74 %ile	67 %ile	70 %ile	69 %ile	65 %ile
2007	10	3873	71 %ile	75 %ile	72 %ile	68 %ile	66 %ile
2007	11	3402	75 %ile	71 %ile	71 %ile	71 %ile	68 %ile

Source: System Website, Data Center

As displayed in the table above, in 2007 students in this school systems' grades 3-11 scored above the 60th percentile in all categories of the

TerraNova Multiple Assessments, Second Edition. While these scores might appear enviable by some stateside school districts, this school system continually strives for improvement through their Community Strategic Plan, which will be explained in subsequent pages.

Table 2

2008 System-wide *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessment Results

Year	Grade	Number of Students	Reading	Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies
2008	3	4800	60 %ile	65 %ile	64 %ile	70 %ile	64 %ile
2008	4	4876	66 %ile	66 %ile	63 %ile	65 %ile	69 %ile
2008	5	4437	69 %ile	70 %ile	66 %ile	66 %ile	67 %ile
2008	6	4309	66 %ile	68 %ile	70 %ile	68 %ile	67 %ile
2008	7	4193	65 %ile	74 %ile	68 %ile	66 %ile	68 %ile
2008	8	4006	71 %ile	70 %ile	70 %ile	69 %ile	67 %ile
2008	9	3748	74 %ile	68 %ile	70 %ile	70 %ile	68 %ile
2008	10	3414	72 %ile	77 %ile	73 %ile	69 %ile	67 %ile
2008	11	2746	75 %ile	71 %ile	69 %ile	70 %ile	69 %ile

Source: System Website, Data Center

Again in 2008, students in this school system scored above the 60th percentile in all subject areas at all grade levels. Results are very similar to the 2007 results, gradually improving throughout the grade levels, with the exception of eleventh grade social studies in 2007 and math as well as social studies in 2008. One explanation for the higher scores at the upper grades is that the parents of lower grades are a cross-section of all grades of enlisted and officer parents. Those who stay in the military long enough for their dependent students to be in middle school and high school are generally upper enlisted and officers, who are more likely to hold a degree and/or higher education. While 2008 scores in the third and fourth grades appear to have stalled, those of grade five through tenth show improvement in most if not all areas.

Another source of data presented here reflects the systems' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is sometimes known as the Nation's Report Card and is administered nationally under the direction of the U.S. Department of Education. The National Assessment of Educational Progress is currently given to students at grade levels four and eight during odd years of the calendar. Both the stateside students of this school system and overseas schools of the system participate in the NAEP as one jurisdiction. Reporting of NAEP scores is done by state or jurisdiction; individual school or student scores are not available. States are required by law to administer NAEP tests in Math and Reading; therefore, only these academic areas are reported below. Data are disaggregated by

student sample populations of interest, such as grade level, gender, and ethnicity. As is evident in the tables below, not only does the entire population of this school system show excellence in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, but both African American and Hispanic students perform especially well in comparison to these same groups in American public schools. In Table 2, schools from the participating school system are ranked in comparison to schools in the United States. "1st" indicates the top ranking among participating states and systems.

Table 2

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2005/2007

Selected School System's National Rankings Compared to American States and Territories by Subject, Year, Grade, and Ethnic Group

	2005 Reading		2007 Reading		2005 Math		2007 Math	
	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade
Selected School System	3rd	2nd	3rd	1st	8th	6th	11th	9th
African American	1st	1st	1st	1st	3rd	1st	4th	1st
Hispanic	2nd	1st	1st	1st	2nd	1st	6th	1st

Source: System-wide Website, Data Center

While students from the selected system maintained an impressive track record on NAEP performance in Reading in 2007, there was a decline in math scores from 2005. According to the worldwide director of this school system, "Math is an area under review. We're going to concentrate our efforts

in examining our current math practices and implement steps to improve our program. We are committed to developing opportunities to foster growth in student achievement in math" (System-wide Website, Data Center, Math Achievement Drops Slightly Section, ¶2). Even with a slight drop in math scores on the NAEP, schools in this system maintained the highest scores in reading in the nation among eighth grade students. Also noteworthy is the fact that Hispanic and African American students performed very well in both math and reading in comparison to their stateside peers. This declining achievement gap for minority students in schools of the selected school system has received a great deal of publicity in the popular press.

In 2001, a report named "March toward Excellence: School Success and Minority Student Achievement in [name omitted] Schools" was released by the National Education Goals Panel. The study, initiated in 1990 as a bipartisan committee, was conducted by the Peabody Center for Education policy at Vanderbilt University. The purpose of this study was to see if the successful school system involved in this study and its effective practices could be used as an example for state and local school systems in America. Eight National Education Goals established by this study were as follows:

> Greater levels of: student achievement; high school completion; teacher education and professional development; parental participation in the schools; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and alcohol-and-drug-free schools. The goals also call for all children to be ready to learn by the time

they start school and for US students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement. (system-wide webpage, news release section)

Following the release of the National Education Goals Panel study, the media took notice of the schools system educating a large number of children whose parents are in the military as a shining example of excellence. The Baltimore Sun (2001) newspaper reported that despite the fact that these schools have a 45% minority student rate, a 35% mobility rate annually, and 50% of students qualifying for the federal free and reduced lunch program, students in the selected school system are scoring among the highest in the nation. This article lauds top management for directing goals and targets, while allowing local leadership leeway in determining how the goals will be met. High standards and expectations are visible throughout the system—for all students. There is very limited use of tracking and teachers have a sense of accountability for their students' success. Many schools are small compared to stateside schools, and teachers are trained well and compensated for their expertise. The Associated Press (2001), The Wall Street Journal (2001), USA Today (2001) and the New York Post (2001) all reported several reasons for success among students who attend schools in this system, that serves large numbers of students whose parents serve in the military. These included: high expectations for all students, local decision making with guidance from administration, financial resources, commendable teacher training and pay, increased communication with stakeholders due to

small school size, exceptional before- and after-school programs, and a military community that is committed to quality education for their students.

An April 21, 2002 episode of CBS' 60 Minutes focused on the effect of parental involvement in schools, specifically those schools that serve a large number of children whose parents serve in the military, as having a profound effect on student success (CBS News, 2002). Parents at schools serving military families are welcomed as contributing stakeholders in the schools. Every student in a school in this system has at least one parent with a job and a minimum of a high school diploma, a claim not many American school systems can make. The military community also has a 50-year track record of racial integration, a fact that may be a contributing factor to the success of minority students in schools in this system. This interview revealed that the school system serving military dependents spends 15% above national average per student. While these schools may not be among the richest schools in the nation, they are far from the bare-bones budgets that many American intercity schools face. What many American schools fail to recognize is the great wealth that can be found in the resources of parents and community.

Despite the much-touted and published outstanding standardized test scores and publicity to commend the schools educating many students whose parents are in the military for high student achievement, there exists little research on the effect of school level leadership—in particular principals—in realizing the goals of the Community Strategic Plan. While many elements

help to build a successful school system, that of leadership cannot be underestimated or overlooked. Therefore, this study of how principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of students whose parents are in the military is needed to uncover best practices in principal leadership.

School Improvement in the Selected School System

The System's Community Strategic Plan

The first strategic plan for this school system was created in 1995. The original plan used goals, benchmarks, strategies, and performance indicators to establish rigorous standards to both inspire and prepare students for a changing world (system-wide website). This plan was a catalyst for change in teaching and learning, raising standards, and increasing accountability. In 2001, the system reviewed the original strategic plan and saw the need to involve more parents, military members, union members, and educators. The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) sought to develop system accountability, achievement standards, and the school improvement process. As a result of the CSP, the school system saw expansion of early childhood programs, development of curriculum standards, increased availability and use of technology, upgraded special education programs, accountability in school improvement, expansion of staff development opportunities, and increased graduation requirements (system-wide website, 2006a).

As a component of a worldwide system, overseas schools educating a large number of military children adhere to the worldwide Community

Strategic Plan (CSP) in order to make a positive difference in student success and school improvement. The Community Strategic Plan released in 2006 includes four parts: (a) highest student achievement; (b) performance-driven, efficient management systems; (c) motivated, high performing, diverse workforce; and (d) promoting student development through partnerships and communication (system-wide website, 2006). Ongoing efforts in school improvement within the school system studied here allow for individual schools and leaders to apply research-based strategies in their efforts to promote highest student achievement.

Goals for the Community Strategic Plan are set in terms of the percent of students in each quarter. All students will perform “At the Standard” level or higher on system-wide, criterion referenced assessments aligned to the… standards.…Annual targets will be established based on school improvement plan data. Seventy-five percent of all students in grades three through eleven will perform “At the Standard” level or higher (the top two quarters) on a system-wide, norm-referenced assessment. Seven percent or less will perform “Below the standard” level (the bottom quarter). All students will perform “At the Standard” level or higher in reading (at grade level) by the end of grades three, six, and nine. All Pre-K-2 students will perform “At the Standard” or higher on developmentally appropriate measures (system-wide webpage, 2006).

NCA-CASI

North Central Association Commission for Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA-CASI) is the accrediting agency for the schools involved in this study. Historically, NCA-CASI has evolved in tandem with various school improvement trends. The six main transitions in its 100 year history began with a focus on resolving competing viewpoints among scholars during the years of 1895 to 1904 (NCA-CASI website). From 1905 to 1945, the commission's mission was verifying student credits in order to prepare them for college admission. From 1945 to the mid 1960s, attention turned to monitoring staff qualifications, textbooks, school facilities, and teacher-pupil ratio. The focus shifted to the actual process of school improvement between 1965 and 1980, and to outcomes of student learning during the 1980s and 90s. The twenty-first century has brought about a renewed concern about preparing students for career transitions.

Many factors cause NCA-CASI to continuously evolve, such as the ever- increasing expectations of graduates by the business community, competitive accreditation entities, diminishing state sponsorships, and pressure from local and state school boards (NCA-CASI website). The ground swell to develop national standards, schools' lack of understanding results-driven evaluation systems, and significant turnover of teachers and administrators are also contributing

factors. Public schools in America are expected to educate all students and be able to produce results to prove their efforts have been successful. With No Child Left Behind, there is wider opportunity for students using vouchers to attend charter schools and private schools.

In 2006, NCA-CASI merged with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) to form the unified organization of AdvancEd. This organization is the world's largest community of educators. It represents over 23,000 private and public schools in 6,000 school districts. Thirty states and 65 countries depend on AdvancED for leadership in education and accreditation, affecting some 15 million students. AdvancEd Standards for Quality Schools include setting vision and purpose, providing governance and leadership, improving teaching and learning, documenting and using results, allocating resources and support systems, building stakeholder communication and relationships, and making a commitment to continuous improvement (AdvancEd website, 2006).

The core of school improvement within the school system used in this study is designed to promote student achievement. This also incorporates establishing partnerships to build support networks for students. While the selected school system is not bound by No Child Left Behind legislation, a culture of continuous improvement is pervasive throughout the organization.

The recently retired director regularly issued improvement challenges directly to district superintendents, insisting on development and reporting of specific interventions to address under-performance in selected schools. This leads to the question of how school-based leaders promote school improvement locally. Granted, there is no one cookie-cutter model of school improvement that works equally well in all settings. Each individual school has its own culture. However, through research, observation, and interviews, I hope to discover the common threads that lead successful administrators in this selected school system to excel in the area of school improvement.

The philosophical construct of this study will be based on the reframing model of Bolman and Deal. Bolman and Deal (2002) have identified four frames for exploring how we operate within organizations. The first of these is the political frame, which may limit authority and resources. The second of these frames is the human resource frame, which examines individual needs and motivation. Thirdly, the structural frame highlights productivity and systems. Lastly, symbolic frame centers attention on making meaning within the culture. The Bolman and Deal frames are described as “powerful, memorable tools” (Bolman & Deal, 2002, p. 5). They “help people see things they once overlooked and come to grips with what is really going on” as well as “see new possibilities and become more versatile and effective in their responses” (p. 5).

Interestingly, I see these four frames as having parallels within the system’s strategic plan. In my research, I will further explore these parallels

and discover how successful principals within this school system lead school improvement. Overseas schools provide a unique setting for school improvement. Once research is conducted to discover school improvement techniques that work in this unique setting, this information can be used to train district administrators. This will be valuable information for me as the School Improvement and Accreditation Liaison for the school district.

Need for the Study

There is a plethora of studies on record pertaining to school improvement; however, this study specifically targets successful principals in overseas schools educating large numbers of children whose parents serve in the United States military. As previously stated, these schools are charged with serving a unique population in a unique setting. While best practices and AdvancEd standards are certainly helpful and necessary as research-based models for successful school improvement, the military environment overseas dictates the need for adaptation.

Since 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation, aimed at using stronger accountability to influence positive results in student learning for *all* children, has been mandated for American schools. Organizations such as AdvancEd have formed alliances with school accrediting agencies to promote a clear vision and well delineated standards, supported with appropriate resources, for school improvement efforts. The urgency for improving schools has hit a nearly frantic pace in United States schools. According to an NCA stateside team leader, schools in the system being studied, which are not

bound by NCLB legislation, lack this urgency of stateside schools (personal communication, 2007). Perhaps part of this lack of urgency can be attributed to the overall current standing of the schools. However, leadership in this system is constantly increasing demands for higher student performance. Fullen (2008) advises that “principals do make a difference in school improvement and student achievement” (p. 1). Leithwood (2000) concludes that the principal is second only to the teacher in influence on student learning. In order to attain higher student performance, the school system must promote strong educational leadership; thus, the need for this study is evident.

Many researchers have added to the school improvement body of knowledge. Killon and Bellamy (2000) as well as Schmoker (1999) stress the use of data in promoting school improvement. Senge (1990, 1996) posits mastery of five disciplines to improve our schools. These disciplines include systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. Fullan (2000, 2005) has applied his change theories to school improvement, suggesting that collaboration is paramount to realizing change. Studies by DuFour and Eaker (1998) have revealed the importance of developing learning communities, where all stakeholders contribute to decision making. More recent publications by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) define professional learning communities (PLCs) as having six characteristics that are interrelated. These include “a focus on learning, a collaborative culture, collective inquiry, an action orientation, a commitment to

continuous improvement, and results orientation" (p. 11). Drucker (1992) and Collins (2001) both suggest a streamlined approach to school improvement by eliminating time- and energy-consuming activities that do not produce results. As is evident in the school system's Community Strategic Plan, progress toward highest student achievement involves making continuous changes to reach goals based on accountability.

While the work of these and many other researchers may serve to enlighten us in the quest for improving American schools, the purpose of this study is to systematically examine practices of selected successful principals in this school system educating a large number of children whose parents serve in the United States military. The intent of this research is to study their leadership in order to discover the variety of approaches these principals use to lead school improvement in these American schools overseas. The research will lead to a compilation of best practices in school improvement leadership.

There have been other studies of leadership conducted in this school system; however, none have focused on leadership specifically in school improvement (school system research branch chief, personal communication, 2007). Likewise, leadership studies have not focused specifically on successful principals within this area and district. This school system operates in an environment influenced by both the military and host nation cultures. This unique environment for the education of American students abroad is worthy of study.

Information gleaned from interviews will be analyzed to detect themes in leadership skills, qualities, and styles. This synthesis of data will be helpful to superintendents, assistant superintendents, and school improvement liaisons as they provide leadership training for principals and assistant principals. It is the beginning of gathering information about skills and abilities needed by principals to be more effective school improvement leaders.

Introduction to the Research Question

The research will be guided by one research question as follows: How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents? Using the Bolman and Deal Model, I will organize interview responses from research subjects into four categories. These include the political frame, the human resource frame, the structural frame, and the symbolic frame. This data will lead to new information on how to successfully lead school improvement.

Definition of Terms

AdvancEd: Established in April 2006 when North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) merged to form one consolidated and unified organization. The purpose of AdvancED is to “help schools maximize student success; build the capacity of schools and school systems to achieve excellence

through high standards, quality assurance, and continuous improvement; and bring together research and resources for student, school, and system improvement" (www.advanc-ed.org).

CSP: Community Strategic Plan. A plan originally launched by the school system in 2001 to ensure system-wide growth and improvement. The plan was revised and released in the fall of 2006, to include four goals: (a) highest student achievement; (b) performance-driven, efficient management systems; (c) motivated, high performing, diverse workforce; and (d) promoting student development through partnerships and communication (system website).

School Improvement: An effective, efficient process to improve student performance (NSSE, Breakthrough School Improvement, 2005).

Leadership: "Articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished" (Richards & Engle, 1986, p. 206).

Deployment: A soldier is sent to an alternate duty station, such as to Iraq, Kuwait, or Afghanistan.

Reintegration: The process of a soldier returning home from war. This is recognized as a potentially difficult time of readjustment for both the soldier and his/her family.

Summary of Chapter

Focusing on three successful school principals in one selected school district within the school system, this study uses perceptions of the principals,

data from interviews, and artifacts/archival data to document leadership best practices that promote school improvement. Observations of the principals in the school setting and artifacts will contribute to the data as well. While much has been written about leadership in education, there is a lack of current research on school improvement leadership in this specific school system and district. This research will add to the body of knowledge about leadership in this unique overseas environment.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of literature informing the research question of “How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?” The review will include literature pertaining to both school improvement and leadership.

School Improvement Literature

In 1983, a blue-ribbon commission appointed by the United States government published *A Nation at Risk*. This report proclaimed a crisis in America’s public education system, warning of dire circumstances threatening our economy and security. While the press sensationalized many of the findings in this report, there were some positive results. The report spawned many school reform proposals and stimulated private philanthropy in support of innovative school improvement initiatives (Goodlad, 2003). There was, as could be expected, some criticism of the report. What the commission failed to have foreseen is public expectation that American schools focus on all four purposes of traditional democratic schooling: academic, vocational, personal, and social education (Goodlad, 2003). Americans hold high expectations for their public institutions of learning.

By the 1990s, state governments claimed education reform as a top priority. In 2001, congress passed No Child Left Behind legislation, setting in motion unprecedented governmental authority over the nation’s public

schools (Wagner & Kegan, et al., 2006). From the United States Department of Education point of view, No Child Left Behind legislation is based on four pillars as follows: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents (online at Ed.gov, n.d.). National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from the last decade shows some progress in math scores at all grade levels; however, reading and writing scores are “sobering” (p.1).

These NAEP scores showed virtually no change since 1980. What, then, has led to these wide spread disappointing results? Surely all of the hard work and good intentions of dedicated, talented professionals, along with significant funding and increased research should have provided results. Wagner and Kegan (2006) believe sweeping social and economic changes both in America and worldwide have hampered efforts to effect meaningful school improvement. Goodlad (2003) warns, “Nationwide implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 will not give us the schools we need” (*The Last Word,* 2007, p. 164).

Like schools across America, the school system selected for this study seeks answers as to how they can maintain high standards for student success and continuous improvement. The ultimate goal of school improvement efforts is to promote student achievement. To this end, goal one of the system’s strategic plan is highest student achievement. The system and districts within the system continually strive to produce the best results in continuous school improvement.

> Greater and faster results are achieved through a systematic approach in which actions are focused on a clear purpose and direction, aligned schoolwide, and work together to achieve improvement goals. Breakthrough results are possible when practitioners commit to improving student performance by increasing a school's effectiveness. (NSSE, 2005, p. vi)

In order to help students succeed, school systems seek to establish high-achieving schools. In an article by the Educational Research Service (ERS, 2002), researchers have found common threads across many studies that identify key factors for high-achieving schools. These include

> . . . challenging learning experiences for all students; a principal who fulfills his/her role as the instructional leader; use of data to assess and make improvements in the instructional program; meaningful opportunities for professional growth and formation of a professional learning community; an emphasis on curricular coherence; and a strong connection between school leaders and central-office staff. (ERS, 2002, p. 1)

Additionally, high-achieving schools hold the belief that all students can excel (Lindsay 1997). In these schools, every child is regarded as an asset (Bauer, 1997). Successful schools are fortunate to have well-qualified, caring teachers who are knowledgeable and do not make excuses for students who are not learning (Black, 2001). They provide rigorous curriculum (including foreign languages, calculus, and trigonometry) and expect all students to

participate. They encourage teachers to match teaching styles with learning styles, providing heterogeneous groupings within small classes on an extended block schedule. In these schools, parents, teachers, and students share a clear vision that is centered on student achievement.

Killon and Bellamy (2000) stress the role of data in school improvement:

> Data are the fuel of reform . . . In short, using data separates good schools from mediocre schools. Schools that are increasing student achievement, staff productivity and collegiality, and consumer satisfaction use data to inform and guide their decisions and actions. Data use essentially sets a course of action and keeps a staff on course to school improvement and student success. (Apply to principal section, ¶ 1, 3)

The use of data is an integral part of daily life in many high-achieving schools. Formative, summative, and interim data are used to gauge student progress. Individual teachers use data within the classroom to judge student learning. Teams or grade levels regularly meet to discuss assessment data, discovering what works and what does not work. Principals analyze school wide data to evaluate specific instructional programs. Once teachers and principals are comfortable with data analysis, they often seek more information and develop sophistication with diagnostic methods. With increased efforts in school/home/community partnerships, parents are also

concerned and interested in learning about data concerning their children and the schools they attend. Indeed, students themselves are curious about their own successes and how to improve their weaknesses. Use of data is increasingly embedded in the daily operations at successful schools (Killion & Bellamy, 2000).

DuFour and Eaker (1998) embrace the work of Covey in suggesting that schools must “begin with the end in mind” (Covey, 1989, p. 204). Before striking out boldly, but perhaps blindly, by experimenting with a bevy of practices, school leaders should begin formation of a learning community by developing a shared “mission, vision, and values” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 25). It is not enough for these principles to be simply articulated by those in positions of leadership, but they must be embraced throughout the school. “Collective inquiry” fuels “the engine of improvement, growth, and renewal in a professional learning community” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 25). People in educational communities regularly question the status quo, then seek, test, and reflect on the effectiveness of these methods. It is this process that builds interest and enthusiasm for change in schools.

Collaborative teams, sharing a common purpose, are the basic structure of professional learning communities. Building these teams requires efforts to create a courteous culture, improve communication and relationships, and enhance the ability to work cooperatively on routine tasks. This is the essential bond that allows for change. Fullan (1993) supports this idea, stressing,

> The ability to collaborate—on both large and small scale—is one of the core requisites of post modern society. . . . In short, without collaborative skills and relationships it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as you need in order to be an agent for social improvement. (pp. 17-18)

Once collaborative teams are established and functioning, professional learning communities "turn aspirations into action and visions in reality" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 28). Action is the new expectation, while inaction is not tolerated. Experimentation is an important corollary. Teachers continually develop and test hypotheses. The self and group reflection on this experimentation leads to growth for both teachers and students. By engaging all staff members in a school in the learning community, the organization commits to continuous improvement. The search for a better way to teach becomes day-to-day business. This is a never-ending, ever-changing commitment, but leads to a "vital way of life" for the school (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 28). Through these efforts to improve schools, there is a results orientation. *Intentions* are not sufficient, but rather *results* based on ongoing assessments determine purposeful improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Senge (1996) also notes "the rationale for any strategy for building a learning organization revolves around the premise that such organizations will produce dramatically improved results" (Senge, 1996, p. 44). In summary, "principals cannot transform a school through their individual efforts. Creating a professional learning community is a collective effort, but that effort has little

chance of success without effective leadership from the principal" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 203).

A professional learning community cannot succeed, much less exist, without effective leadership. Huffman and Hipp (2003) noted that in a successful professional learning community, "leadership pervades the organization" (p. xvii). Similarly, Hord (2004) "found clear evidence that the administrator is key to the existence of a professional learning community" (p. 20). If principals as change agents hope to bring about positive change in schools, they must develop professional learning communities and take steps to develop leadership at all levels. This includes leadership development in administrators, teachers, and students.

While DuFour and Eaker focus primarily on development of learning communities, Schmoker proposes that "the best and most reliable methods for realizing… improvements are largely simple and direct. And they are eminently replicable" (Schmoker, 2002, p. 1). He cautions that the real problem with school improvement is that we tend to ignore or underestimate the simplest and most effective methods. Schmoker also believes there is an overemphasis on elaborate individual strategies. Like DuFour and Eaker, Schmoker favors teachers working in teams. He believes the teams should focus on standards, review simple achievement data to set measurable goals, and work collectively in designing instructional strategies. It is key that these strategies target specific standards revealed as low in the assessment data.

Fullan (2000) believes that schools are successful when they use teams or grade levels to focus on student work and change their instructional practices to get better results. He warns that complex plans to implement change leads to confusion, burden, and overload (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Drucker (1992) writes that schools could make the easiest gains by eliminating unnecessary tasks. Similarly, Collins (2001) believes that we should make a list of those things we can *stop* doing—those activities that consume our precious time and do not provide us the desired results. A common theme of streamlining and making important choices is evident here. Educators regularly bemoan the lack of time and exhausted energy levels the teaching profession creates. Perhaps an effort to streamline school improvement would increase enthusiasm and renew commitment to continuous improvement.

Yet another recurring theme in school improvement is that of curricular coherence. Newmann, et al. (2001) suggests that three conditions are necessary for curricular coherence in a school. The school needs "a common instructional framework that guides curriculum, teaching, assessment, and learning climate, combining specific expectations for student learning with specific strategies and materials to guide teaching assessment" (p. 14). Also important is working conditions for the staff that support the framework for improvement. To this end, resources such as time, materials, and creative staffing must be allocated to advance solid improvement (Newmann, et al., 2001). Newmann warns that flashy equipment and program purchases

without a coherent vision and framework to support the vision will fail to build the school's "capacity to improve teaching and learning" (Newmann, et al., 2001, pp. 13-14). This simply leads to overworked and frustrated teachers and an overall decrease in the effectiveness of school programs.

In 2005, the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), in conjunction with AdvancEd, published *Breakthrough School Improvement: An Action Guide for Greater and Faster Results*. This book outlines a process for school improvement meant to help schools achieve results faster. The four steps in the cycle include creating a vision, creating a profile, developing an action plan, and producing/analyzing results (NSSE, 2005). Creating a vision includes examination of student performance in comparison to research-based factors. Next, the stakeholders must determine beliefs to develop a shared vision in an effort to focus school improvement efforts. Finally, the group determines their "expectations for student learning" (NSSE, 2005, p. 4). Developing a profile involves a complete, encompassing review of information about the school and students. The profile is a document, which describes students, their performance, and school effectiveness. It describes the school and its community. Finally, the profile identifies target areas for improvement (NSSE, 2005). Key actions in the plan include "identifying gaps between current and expected student performance" (NSSE, 2005, p. 4). Once gaps are identified, the schools set goals and determine what interventions and strategies will be implemented to meet the goals. These goals, interventions, and strategies are compiled into action plans, which are monitored. If

expected results are not achieved, adjustments are made to the interventions. In order to gauge whether or not expected results are achieved, schools identify what measures will be used. Schools analyze student performance results and document progress or lack thereof. At this point, faculties and administrators evaluate the success of their interventions, as well as "communicate and use results for further improvement" (NSSE, 2005, p. 4).

Senge (1990) promotes school improvement through the development of learning organizations. At our core, we are all learners. Mastering the ensemble of these five disciplines will enable leaders to guide experimentation and advancement in learning organizations. These disciplines include systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. Systems thinking helps schools discover patterns and clarify how to make changes in these patterns. Schools, as human endeavors, are systems. At times we see only snapshots of the effects of our actions. It takes years to realize the full effect of actions on a school or school system (Senge, 1990). Personal mastery indicates reaching a special proficiency level. By committing to lifelong learning, leaders constantly hone their skills and vision. Ideally, there is a strong connection between personal learning and organizational learning (Senge, 1990). Mental models are described as "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (Senge, 1990, p. 18). We are challenged to "turn the mirror inward," rethinking ideas we have always assumed to be

correct or best (Senge, 1990, p. 18). By scrutinizing our internal images, we open our minds to new ways of thinking. Building a shared vision involves "the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create" (Senge, 1990, p. 18). In order to sustain progress and greatness, an organization and its leaders must have clear goals, values, and a mission. This must be shared throughout the organization. A shared vision enables leaders to foster genuine commitment.

Teams that learn together build extraordinary capacity for growth and improvement. Through dialogue, teams begin to think together and the sum is greater than the total. Teams, rather than individuals, are the "learning unit in modern organizations" (Senge, 1990, p. 20). The process that Senge proposes challenges leaders to develop the five disciplines simultaneously in order to develop a learning organization. In summary, "a learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it" (Senge, 1990, p. 22).

Leadership Literature

> If there's one thing I've learned in my travels, it's that behind every great school, you'll find a great principal. . . .we need strong principals—principals who can empower teachers, engage parents, and ensure that every single one of their students gets the education they deserve. In an increasingly competitive global community, preparation for college and the

> workforce depends on strong and innovative leadership in our nation's schools. (Spellings, 2007, Introductory section, ¶ 1)

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003, 2005) analyzed multiple studies of leadership practices that were associated with positive effects in schools. Their findings indicated that no one set of practices led to success. Rather, there are a variety of practices linked to progress in school improvement. Indeed, principals and school improvement leadership teams within the selected school system educating large numbers of military dependents are granted leeway to find the best researched practices available to meet their individual needs and goals. While guidelines are provided by AdvancEd, school principals are responsible for ensuring the implementation of interventions.

Reeves (2004) developed a Leadership Performance Matrix that identified essential skills for the educational leader to include public communication, staff motivation, and data analysis. Reeves (2006) suggests that a summary of leadership research in education leads to the following conclusions: "Leadership, teaching, and adult actions matter. There are particular leadership actions that show demonstrable links to improved student achievement and educational equity" (p. xxiii). These links include an inquiry approach to studying student data and implementing improvement plans at the classroom and student levels. The strength of these initiatives must be monitored regularly, allowing for adjustments and early intervention. This study of leadership within the selected school district will allow for

identification of these essential skills for educational leaders, as outlined by Reeves.

Many leadership theories have influenced school improvement. Gardner (1998) believed that “the taking of responsibility is at the heart of leadership” (Gardner, 1998, p. 14). In order to explore how successful school principals in the selected school district lead school improvement, it is important to explore historically prominent leadership theories. Quite simply, “leadership matters” (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995, p. 224); however, “leadership takes many forms” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 272). Interviewing successful principals and observing them in their natural setting will enable me to study different forms of leadership within the selected district.

Transformational leadership and transactional leadership both have their roots in the work of Burns (1978). Burns defines leadership as

> Leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations. (p. 19)

Burns makes a distinction between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership involves trading one thing for another (quid pro quo), as opposed to transformational leadership, which focuses on change.

Transactional Leadership

Bass and Avolio (1994) describe three forms of transactional leadership, including management-by-exception-passive, management-by-exception-active, and constructive transactional. Management-by-exception-passive involves setting standards and reserving exertion of management behaviors for problematic situations. In contrast, management-by-exception-active leaders pay careful attention to situations as they evolve, set standards, and carefully monitor behaviors. This type of aggressive management does not encourage risk-taking or experimentation. Of the transactional leadership styles, constructive transactional leadership is viewed as the most effective. In this leadership style, “the leader sets goals, clarifies desired outcomes, exchanges rewards and recognition for accomplishments, suggests or consults, provides feedback, and gives employees praise when it is deserved” (Sosik & Dionne, 1997, p. 447).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, often producing results beyond expectations, is the favored leadership style (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Burns explains that transformational leaders form “a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (Burns, 1985, p. 4). Bass articulated the “Four I’s of transformational leadership: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence” (Bass, 1990, p. 218).

In 1994 Leithwood built on the works of Burns (1978), Bass (1985), and Bass and Avolio (1994) to specifically research leadership in education. Leithwood notes that school principals hoping to meet the challenges of the 21st century must master the Four I's of transformational leadership as identified by Bass and Avolio (1994). The principal must give personal attention to staff members, learning their strengths and weaknesses (individual consideration). The effective administrator must confidently and energetically communicate high expectations to students and teachers alike (inspirational motivation). The school leader must help teachers develop creative solutions to old and new problems in the school (intellectual stimulation). The principal must always provide a model of admirable character, behavior, and accomplishment (idealized influence) (Leithwood, 1994).

More recently, Leithwood (2000) compiled data from research to develop transformational leadership traits.

> The model of transformational leadership developed from our own research in schools conceptualizes transformational leadership along eight dimensions: building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture;

and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000, p. 118)

Leithwood (2000) also emphatically states, “changing times demand different leadership” (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000, p. 204). He believes that “transformational approaches to leadership can make significant contributions to a number of important schools for which schools are responsible” (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000, p. 204). The research of Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) discusses the impact of transformational leadership on student success, saying that principals who engage in professional relationships and pay close attention to teaching learning see a positive effect on student achievement.

Authentic Leadership

Evans (1996) introduced the concept of the authentic leader, stressing that transformation begins with trust. Evans believes that “trust is the essential link between leader and led, vital to people’s job satisfaction and loyalty, vital to followership” (Evans, 1996, p. 287). Evans cautions that once trust is broken, repair is nearly impossible. In order to be successful leaders, principals need to inspire trust, admiration, and loyalty. The key to this is authentic leadership, based on values and marked by integrity and savvy (Evans, 1996). Integrity hinges on “fundamental consistency between one’s values, goals, and actions” (Evans, 1996, p. 289). Savvy is “knowing what to do and when

to do it" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 15). Authenticity cannot "be generated; it can only be discovered" (Evans, 1996, p. 295).

Leadership Theories XYZ

McGregor (1960) posed Theory X and Theory Y of leadership. "Theory X holds that people are basically lazy and unambitious, that they need and want to be led; managers must direct and control their work" (McGregor, 1960, pp. 35-36). Additionally, McGregor's "Theory Y holds that people can be relied upon to show motivation, self-control, and self-direction, provided that essential human needs for safety, independence, and status are met by the workplace" (pp. 35-36). More recently, "Theory Z places maximum emphasis on human potential, calling for higher levels of trust and for egalitarian work relationships and participatory decision making involving stakeholders at all levels" (Ouchi, 1981, p. 110). Each school leader's style will be influenced by local conditions, but a primary predisposition may be evident (Evans, 1996).

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Yet another classic study in leadership is that of Deming's Total Quality Management (TQM) (Deming, 1986). Deming provided the framework for United States manufacturing firms to restore their dominance after World War II. While firms such as Xerox and Ford embraced Deming's theories, some of his principles pertain to educational settings as well. Waldman (1993) organized Deming's 14

points into five basic categories that “define the actions of an effective leader: change agency, teamwork, continuous improvement, trust building, and eradication of short-term goals” (Waldman, 1993, p. 65).

In order to be change agencies, leaders must be able to assess needs of organizations, isolate and eliminate barriers to change, create shared visions as well as a sense of urgency, implement plans and structures to promote change, and create a culture of open communication (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Creating teams whose members’ skills complement one another can promote effective change, especially when the team members are working together toward common goals. When this occurs, team members share the responsibility for achieving the goals. The effective leader does not stop at establishing teams, but also provides necessary support and resources for the teams to succeed (Sosik & Dionne, 1997).

Trust building involves creating a “win-win situation” mentality (Covey, 1999, p. 204). Sosik and Dionne (1997) define trust building as “the process of establishing respect and instilling faith into followers based on leader integrity, honesty, and openness” (p. 450). In order to build trust and maximize effectiveness, leaders strive to learn both what concerns and motivates employees. Sosik and Dionne (1997) explain that Deming disdained goals that emphasized quantitative, short-term results. Within the management by objectives model (MBO), Drucker (1974) promoted such goals, traditionally based on quotas and

demanding quick results. The goals Deming advocated, instead, were focused on continuous progress with long-term perspective. Effective leaders participate in both goal design and realistic implementation. Schools in the selected system follow a five-year cycle of continuous progress toward specific, student-oriented achievement goals. Principals and teacher leaders are tasked with realistic implementation of these goals. This study of leadership in school improvement will gather information on successful continuous school progress.

Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership emerged from the work of Greenleaf (1970, 1977). Greenleaf believed that the desire to help others is what spurns effective leadership. The servant leader places him/herself in the center of the organization, rather than at the top. This dynamic of centralized influence demands critical skills of the servant leader, including "understanding the personal needs of those within the organization, healing wounds caused by conflict within the organization, being a steward of resources of the organization, developing the skills of those within the organization, and being an effective listener" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 17). While servant leadership theory is not considered a comprehensive theory, it has become part of other theories, such as Total Quality Management (TQM). It is also an apparent influence on the thinking of numerous other leadership theorists such as Covey (1992); Elmore (2000); Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001).

Situational Leadership

The works of several leadership theorists includes situational leadership. These include Hersey and Blanchard (Blanchard, Carew, & Parisi-Carew, 1991; Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001). Basically, situational leadership explains that leaders adapt their leadership behaviors according to the maturity (defined as "willingness and ability to perform a specific task") of their followers (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 17). More specifically, leaders determine their leadership styles by matching various leadership behaviors with those of supervisees.

> When followers are unable or unwilling to perform a given task, the leader directs the followers' actions without much concern for personal relationships. This style is referred to as high task-low relationship focus, or the *telling style*.
>
> When followers are unable but willing to perform the task, the leader interacts with followers in a friendly manner but still provides concrete direction and guidance. This style is referred to as high task-high relationship focus, or the *participating style*.
>
> When followers are able but unwilling to perform the task, the leader does not have to provide much direction or guidance but must persuade followers to engage in the task. This style is

> referred to as low task-low relationship focus, or the *selling style*.
>
> When the followers are able and willing to perform the task, the leader leaves the execution of the task to the followers with little or no interference, basically trusting followers to accomplish the task on their own. This style is referred to as the low task-high relationship focus, or the *delegating style.* (p. 17)

An effective leader knows how to read situations and is skilled at applying the most appropriate technique for getting the task done in the current situation. He/she realizes that no one style of relating to followers will work all of the time.

Heifetz (1994) and Linsky (2002a, 2002b) proposed a slightly different type of situational leadership. They emphasized the need to adapt leadership behaviors, making a distinction between three types of situations a leader might encounter. For day-to-day operations, leaders establish routines and standard operating procedures. When problems occur within an organization, the researchers propose providing resources to help employees seek new solutions. When situations involving serious conflict arise, Heifetz and Linsky believe it is necessary to facilitate evolution of new beliefs, involving all stakeholders in the process in order to share responsibility for success.

Trait Theories

Several other theorists have influenced leadership practice in K-12 schools. Bennis (2003) focuses on leadership necessary to lead schools in the 21st century. He identifies critical characteristics for effective leaders, including being able to lead others in creating a shared vision. Additionally, the leader should possess a clear voice characterized by a sense of self, sense of purpose, and self-confidence. Leaders must also operate with a high moral code and possess the ability to adapt to the pressures of relentless change.

Block (2003) suggests that leadership hinges on the act of effective questioning. He believes that leaders are social architects who must lead critical discussions in order to develop ideas from all participants, rather than to arrive at premature solutions. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) worked with the Gallup Corporation in developing 34 signature talents or strengths that individuals might possess. They suggest building an organization based on strengths of the employees. While their works suggest that employers select the right people up front, this might not be possible in a school where an administrator might inherit a group of tenured teachers. Their work also noted that strength (or weakness) in one area does not necessary indicate strength or weakness in another area. However, schools may benefit from their ideas about focusing on training to develop specific strengths and avoiding promoting people out of their areas of strength.

Collins (2001) studies have influenced both business and education. Collins suggests ways to go from “good to great” (p. 1). In describing Level 5 (top) leaders, Collins suggests that these leaders are more interested in building a great organization than they are in drawing attention to themselves, thus displaying a sense of personal humility. These leaders show intense commitment to their organizations, even when the circumstances are difficult. When things go wrong, they look inward for better ways to cope, rather than blaming others or external factors. Other characteristics of Level 5 leaders include reliance on high standards for attaining goals, rather than personal charisma, choosing the right people to accomplish tasks, creating a disciplined climate, objectively examining the facts regarding their organization, and facing difficult questions about the future of their organization (Collins, 2001).

The work of Covey, while not directed per se toward educators, has been highly influential in education. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1999) posits seven behaviors with the potential to generate positive results. Covey’s habits, or directives for leaders, include being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, putting first things first, striving to achieve win-win situations, seeking first to understand and then to be understood, synergizing, and sharpening the saw to learn from previous mistakes. A second book by Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (1992), builds on the seven habits as operating principles for effective leaders. It emphasizes the need for a

strong sense of purpose and principles in choosing day-to-day actions. Covey's third book *First Things First* (Covey, Merrill, & Merrill, 1994) addresses time management and prioritizing. This book emphasizes the total picture of the merger of a leader's personal and professional time. Thornton (2006) interviewed seventy-five of the most innovative leaders in the world to glean their advice on leadership; from this activity he identified five attributes of great leaders; "integrity, courage, focus, perseverance, and ability to change" (p. 9). Of these traits, Thornton cites integrity as the cornerstone of leadership, proposing, "It doesn't matter how committed you are, what mission statement you've developed, how optimistic you are, how skilled you are at resolving conflicts, or how courageous you are—if your followers do not trust you (p. 12).

Distributed Leadership

While Elmore (2000) parallels researchers who promote instructional leadership, he warns that understanding of curriculum practices, instruction, and assessment are not enough. Elmore cautions that the principal may not have the energy, time, or expertise to master all of these areas. Instead, he promotes distributed leadership. Other researchers who embrace distributed leadership include Spillane and his colleagues (Spillane & Sherer, 2004; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2003). Going beyond a simple distribution of tasks, these researchers characterize an interactive web

of leaders and followers with flexibility for change as the status of the organization evolves. They believe that the functions of a leader may be stretched out over multiple leaders, depending on the situation. This sometimes causes a chain effect, called collaborative distribution. At other times, leaders may act independently toward a shared goal; this is known as collective distribution. Still another scenario, coordinated distribution, occurs when different individuals lead sequential tasks. Robinson (2008) warns that while applying distributive leadership to the educational setting is not without trials, the use of the talents of others in leadership roles within the school to accomplish a collaborative, supportive network can produce positive results for both teachers and students.

Instructional Leadership

Principals alone cannot hope to transform their schools. However, they must provide the appropriate leadership to build a progressive community, whose goal is to promote student success. Fullan (1995a) reflects

> Principals must live with paradox—two competing demands that pull them in seemingly opposite directions. They must have a sense of urgency about improving their schools that is balanced by the patience that will sustain them over the long haul. They must focus on the future but must also remain grounded in the reality of the present. They must be both “loose” and “tight” in

> their leadership style, encouraging autonomy while at the same time demanding adherence to shared vision and values. They must celebrate successes while perpetuating discontent with the status quo. They must be strong leaders who empower others. (p. 705)

In order to meet these challenges, principals must commit themselves to the following guidelines outlined by DuFour and Eaker (1998). Principals must build professional learning communities, communicate the mission, values, and goals on a daily basis, and creative collaborative structures focused on teaching and learning. They are expected to shape school culture in order to support the professional learning community and foster curriculum that focuses on student learning. To do this, teachers must be encouraged to think of themselves as leaders. The principals should practice leadership strategies that invite consensus and collaboration, while establishing personal credibility based on trust and respect. By working with staff members to articulate clear, measurable goals, the learning community becomes fixate on results. This enables all stakeholders to develop monitoring systems to continually evaluate results, celebrate success, and inform practice. Finally, the principal in his/her leadership role must recognize the continuous nature of school improvement and lead accordingly. Opportunities for growth and professional development

should be embedded into daily work, rather than limited to special events or programs (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Leadership Capacity

Lambert (2003) posits, “all humans are capable of leadership” (p. 4). Accordingly, Lambert believes that shared decision-making and leadership within the school broadens the resource base and possibilities within a school. Lambert adds:

> Everyone has the right, responsibility, and capability to be a leader. The adult learning environment in the school and district is the most critical factor in evoking acts of leadership. Within the adult learning environment, opportunities for skillful participation top the list of priorities. How we define leadership frames how people will participate in it. Educators yearn to be purposeful, professional human beings, and leadership is an essential aspect of professional life. Educators are purposeful, and leadership realizes purpose.

Reframing

While many researchers over the past decades have proposed ways of approaching school leadership, two theorists offer a reframing structure that encompasses many of the strategies outlined for effective leadership. Bolman and Deal (2002) seek to clarify the overwhelming mystery that may transform schools. Schools are complex systems, and in order to make some sense of these systems, it is helpful to “use multiple frames or lenses, each offering a

different perspective on common challenges" (p. 3). These focused frames are comprehensive and allow leaders to consciously analyze a situation from multiple perspectives, often leading to innovative solutions. This new way of thinking ends the "one solution" dilemma. "When we don't know what to do, we do more of what we know—we're only digging ourselves into a deeper hole" (p. 3). This study of school improvement leadership in will provide a wide-range of strategies for effective leadership. These frames allow the emergence of new possibilities, encouraging effective and versatile responses from leaders.

Bolman and Deal (2002) identified four frames that are commonly used by administrators as well as teachers. "The political frame points out the limits of authority and the inevitability that resources are almost always too scarce to fulfill all demands" (p. 3). As individuals as well as schools struggle for power within schools and classrooms, all are caught up in a swirling vortex. Often compromise and bargaining bring about answers that lack rational analysis. While conflict is inevitable within an organization, it can serve as a source of renewal and energy.

Principals and teachers often use the human resource frame when attempting to build trusting, caring work environments. This frame highlights human motives and needs. Involving stakeholders in decision-making empowers them and increases concern for the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2002). When individual and group goals,

rules, and responsibilities are clear, people are more effectively held accountable. This is the premise of the structural frame. Rules, policies, measurable standards, and authority help make this possible. In order to bring meaning into the school culture, the symbolic frame expresses shared values. Through stories, heroes, metaphors, rituals, and ceremonies, the school becomes a joyful place to work and learn. The symbolic frame can also increase hope, commitment, and loyalty. Reframing can help make sense of confusing situations and reveal creative, innovative solutions that propel schools into substantive growth. Leaders can use these frames to develop "powerful leadership strategies" (Bolman & Deal, 2002, p. 5).

Change Leadership

Leadership is fundamentally about change. Fullan (2005a) explains "leadership is to this decade what standards were to the 1990s if we want large-scale, sustainable reform" (p. xi). Further, "leadership (not 'leaders') is the key to the new revolution" (p. xi). According to Fullan, school systems must learn how to sustain their efforts (2005a). This is accomplished by taking system thinking and putting it to the test in practice, or the "reality test" at school, district, and state levels (p. 85). At the school level, Fullan proposes that increased assessment *for* learning, developing "school cultures that learn," and increasing parent and community involvement are imperative (Fullan, 2005a, p. 57). In order to take on these daunting

challenges, school level leaders must interact with peers and establish support systems.

Fullan's (2001) works focus on both individuals and organizations "making meaning" of their approaches to learning. This culture within schools and systems involves a heavy emphasis on values and relationships, rather than structural change. The principal is identified in the key player in the capacity of each school to achieve continual improvement. Through connectivedness and synergy, schools build capacity for growth and improvement. Success is the result of an interactive community in schools led by the principal as the main change agent, not top-down decision making. Because each school's environment and culture is unique, there is no one definitive blueprint for success. Effective leadership in a progressive school involves a sense of urgency and a mix of pressure and support. Further, Fullan states that people do not develop commitment to change until they are involved in the process. Change is seen as a see-saw of excitement of the unknown possibilities and stability of the status quo. While no one is certain of the future, having a stake in the future is what drives progress.

Continuous School Progress, formerly known as School Improvement, is essentially about change. How appropriate, then, that one of the major topics addressed in Pat Roy's (National Staff Development Council) November 2005 presentation would focus on change. Not only are we as

leaders striving to accomplish positive changes in our schools and system, but the system itself is also undergoing major change. The closure of nine schools in the selected school district over a two-year period (2007-2008) created an environment of forced change for many. As schools closed due to restructuring, staff members of these closing schools manifested emotional reactions ranging from grief and mourning to excitement over fresh adventures. How, then, do we as leaders encourage and inspire our colleagues to stretch and challenge themselves to achieve higher goals? I believe the secret is in knowing one's audience. Just as an effective teacher must differentiate instruction for his/her students, school improvement liaisons must make the effort to appraise each school individually to ascertain its readiness for change. Additionally, we must recognize that within each school individual staff members possess varying levels of readiness for change.

Kanter (1985) proposed ten common reasons for resistance to change. These included loss of control, loss of face, excess uncertainty, the element of surprise, the difference effect (will it really make a difference?), concerns about future competence, increased workload, threat to job security, ripple effects, and past resentments. Change presents an unpredictable journey. "Managing the Human Side of Change" and "making employees feel good about change is a challenge for today's managers," including school principals (Kanter, 1985, p. 52). Hall, Hord, and Louks (1987) developed a continuum outlining the "Stages of Concern about an Innovation." With practice and experience as the Continuous School Improvement Liaison, I

can use these steps to guide schools in the selected district through the cycles of accreditation and school improvement. Following is an application of Hall, Hord, and Louks' model of change.

While school personnel are at the awareness stage of learning about an innovation, they have little involvement or concern. At this time, the supervisor or liaison needs to model use of the innovation, provide information, encourage collegial discussions in both small and large groups, and highlight the personal benefits of the change. The informational stage allows for a greater flow of details concerning characteristics, requirements, and effects. At this time it is appropriate to allow school visits to other facilities that have embraced the change, as well as to provide articles, do demonstrations, and lengthen presentations. During the personal stage, each individual evaluates the investment he/she will have to make in the process or organization. At this time, set reasonable expectations and validate personal beliefs (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987).

The management stage focuses attention on specific tasks and the process of implementing the innovation. At this stage, organizing, scheduling, and efficient managing come into play (Hall, Hord, & Loucks, 1987). At this time, an innovation configuration may be used to outline how the innovation will be accomplished. Peer coaching may also be helpful, allowing for feedback and assurance (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). Once an innovation has been adopted, participants begin to think about the consequences. Thus, the consequence stage shifts attention to feedback and

student outcomes (Hall, Hord, & Loucks, 1987). In Continuous School Progress, this step would equate to the review of student data. Reinforcement and encouragement would need to be a regular occurrence during this phase (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). The collaboration stage thrives on cooperation with colleagues and coordination (Hall, Hord, & Loucks), often referred to as collegiality. Verbal praise, opportunities for peer coaching, and idea exchanges can lead to the rare ideal of true collaboration among colleagues (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). Finally, refocusing allows an examination of benefits that have sprung from the change. At this time, individuals may even offer alternate ideas and refine the original innovation concept (Hall & Hourd, 2001). Establishing parameters, pilot testing, and resources can help focus energy at this time (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). All of these "Stages of Concern about an Innovation" point out a tenet voiced by Fullan: "Assume that any significant innovation, if it is to result in change, requires individual implementers to work out their own meaning" (2001, p.108).

DuFour, Eakers, and DuFour (2005) in an adaptation of Pfeffer and Sutton's (2002) knowing-doing gap identified ten barriers to action. As applied below, these known barriers to the Continuous School Progress process provide new light for designing staff development as a catalyst to change.

Substituting a Decision for Action

An example of substituting a decision for action would be for the headquarters or central office of a school system to unilaterally dictate the school improvement goal for all schools and then expect schools to enthusiastically embrace the goal. Without ownership of the decision, it is unlikely that the school system would realize new action. This is why the school system studied in this study gives the direction of selecting school goals to support highest student achievement, but encourages schools to select their own goals based on local data. Making a decision on a school improvement goal at the headquarters level for all schools would simply not produce buy-in at the school level or yield desired results.

Substituting Mission for Action

All schools and districts in the selected school system develop their own mission statements. It is understood that the mission statements of the system, districts, and schools should support one another. The mission statement is theoretically developed by all stakeholders, posted on school websites, published in school handbooks, and included in various official school documents. However, this does not automatically mean that all staff members, much less parents or students, are even cognizant of the mission statement. While it is helpful to develop a mission statement, it is not a substitute for goals and interventions. School improvement interventions and strategies provide impetus for action in the schools.

Planning as a Substitute for Action

Continuous School Improvement requires an action plan outlining goals, interventions, strategies, resources, and staff development. However, the written plan is useless if there is no accompanying action and eventual evaluation of that action. As I brief schools, I often say, “There has to be action in your action plan!” However, it is up to principals, as leaders of the schools, to lead and oversee that this ideal comes to fruition. While planning is an integral part of change, it must lead to action. To continue the momentum, these actions must have some sense of urgency.

Complexity as a Barrier to Action

Capacity Assessment Instrument, Final Documentation Report, goals, interventions, strategies, criterion referenced assessments, norm-referenced assessments, local assessments, triangulation of data, disaggregated data, profiles, AdvancED standards, QAR, SAR, and ACR are among the vocabulary terms that add to the complexity to understanding the NCA-CASI/AdvancED model for School Improvement. With the recent merger of NCA-CASI with SACS and NSSE to form a new partnership, schools are faced with complexity beyond the understanding of the average classroom teacher whose life does not revolve around school improvement. All of this complexity may be a barrier to action if it is not broken down into gradual steps and under-girded with effective training and appropriate individual school follow-up.

Mindless Precedent as a Barrier to Action

When the new Continuous School Progress model was introduced in the fall of 2006, School Improvement Liaisons were confronted with schools who complained that they were just beginning to learn the NCA-CASI model when suddenly everything changed. As one CSP chairperson recently lamented, “It’s like trying to hit a moving target” (personal communication, August 2006). In order to meet the new protocol, schools will not be able to say, “We’ve always done it that way.” Perhaps in this case, action will—in reality—be a barrier to mindless precedent! As my former principal and mentor is fond of saying, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got” (personal communication, August 2006). The status quo is often the most comfortable position, but principals are tasked with motivating teachers to move forward in an effort to attain highest student achievement.

Internal Competition as a Barrier to Action

While competition is not always bad, cooperation will lead to more success for schools in the Continuous School Progress process. Schools, districts, and communities are certainly aware of any schools in the area that do not do well with their Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR) for NCA-CASI. Most schools are very supportive of one another in this process, sharing information about previous visits, powerful interventions, and successful staff development efforts. I do not often see schools competing against one another in school improvement (external competition); however, there are

sometimes power struggles within schools (internal competition). Power struggles and resulting disharmony between staff and administration are certainly barriers to progress. This is not to say conflict cannot be an impetus for positive change. At other schools, departments or grade levels jockey for position in order to promote their own agendas. The big losers in these situations are the students. As the CSP liaison, I have the challenge of diffusing potentially destructive competitions and creating a culture of cooperation for school improvement. This can only happen when I am a frequent visitor to schools, observe school dynamics, and develop collegial relationships at the school level. Working with both faculty members and principals allows me to suggest viable solutions that fit with each school's unique culture and community.

Badly Designed Measurement Systems as a Barrier to Action

Strictly-speaking, high-stakes testing is not a reality in the school system selected for this study. Unlike stateside schools bound by the No Child Left Behind legislation, teachers', principals', and superintendents' jobs are not hanging in the balance of their test scores. However, system-wide assessments are used to assist teachers in determining student strengths and weaknesses in order to improve academic skills. Parents benefit in knowing how their children perform in a variety of academic subjects. The testing also provides accountability for the school system. This accountability is of great interest to Congress, who approves funding for the school system educating a large number of children whose parents serve in the military.

There is certainly pressure put on under-performing schools to improve; high expectations are set and special improvement plans are required of these schools. Important decisions about funding from Congress, course offerings, staff development opportunities, course placement, administrative and teacher assignments, and college acceptance are based on test results. Ultimately, testing is important.

By annually reviewing the validity and reliability of system-wide tests, we reassure stakeholders of their value. Additionally, school improvement is not based solely on one test. Three assessments are recommended for showing student academic growth. Rather than focusing on only end-of-cycle data, schools are asked to disaggregate data yearly to identify sub-groups that need special attention. Additionally, five-year data displays help the schools to see the big picture of the entire school improvement cycle. Again, the interventions and strategies are where the action is created, but without test data we do not know where to focus our school improvement energies.

Formative data and authentic assessment are used to gauge progress and make necessary adjustments in interventions, strategies, and instruction. An emphasis on formative assessment, or assessment *for* learning, is increasingly in the limelight. Black and William (1998) identify key elements of formative assessment as: 1) The identification by teachers and learners of learning goals, intentions or outcomes and criteria for achieving these; 2) Rich conversations between teachers and students that continually build and go deeper; 3) The provision of effective, timely feedback to enable students to

advance their learning; 4) The active involvement of students in their own learning; and 5) Teachers responding to identified learning needs and strengths by modifying their teaching approach(es). As the five year NCA CASI cycle proceeds in schools within the identified school system during school years 2006-2011, we are striving to increase teacher learning about formative assessments in order to enhance student learning. Staff development for school improvement leaders at the school level will include training on this topic. Changes in Assessment and Accountability Branch leadership in 2007 and 2008 are leading to rapid changes in system-wide assessments.

An External Focus as a Barrier to Action

One of the most imposing external focuses for many teachers and principals within this system from 2003 to 2009 is the war in Iraq and its effects on our students. It may be difficult to be enthusiastic about statistical data and Continuous School Improvement at a time when overseas schools are seen as the rock of the community, supporting not only our students, but often their families as well. A second external focus is that of the Army's transformation, which translates to schools closing in our communities. Facing the loss of home, community, and employment, many educators are instantly plummeted to the base of Maslow's Hierarchy when their main concern is where they will work and live next year, as well as how they will provide shelter and food for their families (Goble, 2004). When we are forced into survival mode, we are not able to focus on self-actualization. In the cases

of both of these external focuses, we as educators still owe our students the best possible education, regardless of whether they are the final class graduating from a closing school or kindergarteners just beginning their formal educations.

A Focus on Attitudes as a Barrier to Action

People are in a constant state of evolution, as are our society and educational system. To presume that we could just stop School Improvement until all educators got their attitudes aligned is almost humorous. This simply would never happen in any organization. There certainly would not ever be any “continuous” or “progress” in Continuous School Progress. While attitudes, emotions, and learning styles must be recognized in the process of staff development as a whole, they cannot become the focus. Rather than ignoring diversity of learners, principals must embrace the strengths of their staff members and use their wide-ranging talents to lead the faculty as a whole. Students are not the only population who need differentiated instruction; this idea also applies to adult learners. There are many ice-breaker activities and psychological surveys, both formal and informal, to identify various learning styles and strengths.

Training as a Substitute for Action

Action in Continuous School Progress may be stunted or delayed due to the “wait for the training” excuse. While training itself is useful and necessary, much of what we learn in schools comes from informal research in the classroom, sometimes referred to as action research. Effective teachers

intuitively know what works and what does not work, constantly using this powerful information to adapt and improve their teaching. Collaborating with other teachers and reading professional books and journals can lead to significant changes in teaching practices. Outstanding teachers do not procrastinate and hope that knowledge of good teaching practices will be magically imparted to them through a mountain-top experience funded seminar. Outstanding principals help their staff see the value of action research, professional reading, peer observations, and team leadership as learning opportunities and impetus for change.

Dufour, Eaker, and Dufour (2005) have outlined ten barriers to change. It is imperative that leaders at the system, area, district, and school levels recognize these barriers and make allowances for resistance to change. This is a crucial step to making progress in school improvement. As leaders, wise principals learn how to meet this challenge and move their schools forward.

Marzano (2003) suggests several ideas for implementing incremental change. Not only does the principal need to provide resources for the school, but he/she also has the responsibility to protect teachers from unnecessary distractions. The leader must always be an advocate for the school and maintain visibility. Marzano places a great deal of emphasis on relationships—relationships with the community, teachers and principals, teachers and students, and teachers and parents. All of these relationships are important to successful change. In order to build these relationships, strong lines of communication must be established. Overall, the school should

share a culture of collaboration. Finally, the principal should lead the faculty in looking for and celebrating successes.

Collaborative Leadership

Reeves (2006) states, “leadership is neither a unitary skill set nor a solitary activity” (p. xxiv). Accordingly, this researcher offers an alternate definition of leadership: “Leaders are the architects of individual and organizational improvement” (p. 27). Reeves (2006) reminds us that employees are in fact volunteers, given that their hearts and minds are only given to the organization voluntarily. While leaders as authorities may ultimately make decisions, the resulting implementations can only be carried out with collaboration. Lastly, improvement and leverage takes place by the grace of networks, not by the works of one leader.

In his studies, Glickman (1993) calls for enduring results in school improvement. Collective and individual intelligence are the most underestimated resource we as educators have in making this goal a reality. Leadership is the catalyst that will help us achieve wide-scale, sustained improvement (Schmoker, 1999). According to Marzano’s (2003) studies, “the average correlation between principal leadership behavior and school achievement is .25, which means one standard deviation increase in principal leadership is associated with a ten percent point gain in school achievement” (p. 2). Hence, we are not studying leadership for leadership’s sake. Instead, we are studying school leadership for the sake of higher student achievement. The

school system selected for this study promotes a “motivated, high performing, diverse workforce” in order to advance “highest student achievement” (system website, 2007). By studying school improvement leadership, I hope to build on our knowledge of how principals develop this collective intelligence and sustained improvement.

Summary

This chapter has outlined an historic perspective of school improvement models and theories. Additionally, several leadership theories and concepts were explained. There is a long, wide history of leadership literature; parallel to this is the history of leadership in education. While there is extensive literature on school improvement and leadership, there is a lack of research specifically based on the experiences of principals within a school system that educates a large number of children with military parents. This study will add to the body of knowledge of school improvement leadership by principals in a selected district. Because the Bolman and Deal (2002) model is flexible and broad in its approach to reframing leadership, this model will be used as the theoretical underpinning of this study of how successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology of this qualitative study of how successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents. The chapter will provide specific information on methodology, such as sample selection criteria, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study. The chapter ends with a summary.

The Research Question

The research question guiding this study is "How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?" By understanding how successful principals operate, I sought to add to the body of knowledge about educational leadership in school improvement. School principals within this district operate in a unique military/host culture environment overseas. There is currently a deficit of research on school level leadership of school improvement in this realm.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology used in this study reflected the model described by Glesne (2006). The study sought "to understand and interpret how the various participants . . . construct the world around them" (p. 4). As described by Stake (2006) and Yin (2003), this is a bound case study. This is by virtue of the fact that the study

occurred within one district, within one school system, and within the auspices of the Department of Defense. Because of these boundaries, effectiveness of the principals may not come about in the same way it would in a stateside public or private school. The military environment creates a culture of its own, lending authority, structure, and regulations to the schools educating children of the military.

Through interviews and observations, I gained "access to the multiple perspectives of the participants" (p. 5). This access was granted by the school system through an extensive research review board process that was encumbered by governmental regulations. My role in the district is that of School Improvement and Assessment Liaison. As such, I interact regularly with all principals in the district, as well as the district administrators and school improvement chairpersons throughout the district. To conduct unbiased research, I had to set aside any pre-conceived notions or biases concerning the successful principals selected for the study. This was imperative in order for me to be effective as a researcher.

In designing qualitative research, Glesne poses the following assumptions: "Reality is socially constructed, and variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure" (p. 5). Certainly principals lead in a social setting, interacting constantly with teachers, staff members, students, and parents. Due to the complex nature of leadership, measuring overt and covert interactions is not a simple

task. While quantitative instruments of leadership are available, the attributes of this study closely parallel case study methodology as described by Glesne. This adds credence to the use of qualitative research methodology for this study of how principals lead school improvement. Further support of qualitative methodology as a match for this study comes from a leading qualitative researcher and author, Creswell (1998), who defines qualitative research as follows:

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Merriam (1998), Stake (1995), and Yin (2003) all describe a case study and comparison of several cases as an appropriate methodology when there is a desire to understand individuals and programs. In this study, I strove to understand leadership methods the principals use to carry out the school improvement programs at their schools. Through the process of my study, I used data from interviews, observations, and artifacts to build an understanding of the perspectives of principals as leaders of school improvement in the selected district. I analyzed the words, actions, and interactions of the principals as collected in their natural setting, the school, in order to paint a holistic picture of their experiences and perspectives. The

resulting rich description adds to the body of knowledge on school improvement leadership, particularly in schools educating children of the military.

Qualitative research, as described by Glesne (2006) also requires “contextualization, understanding, and interpretation” (p. 5). The interviews and observations were done within the context of the school setting to build understanding of the principal’s perspective. Furthermore, the overseas military environment was considered. Following the interviews and observations, transcripts of the interviews and fieldnotes from the observations were interpreted and analyzed. During the analysis phase, I searched for themes and patterns to weave into a rich description. Throughout the process, there was “personal involvement’ and “empathic understanding,” two of the characteristics Glesne (2006) identifies as characteristics of qualitative research (p. 5). Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest consideration of four aspects of sampling for qualitative research: artifacts, events, actors, and settings. With this in mind, I designed this qualitative research to interview principals (actors) in selected district schools (settings); observed principals at faculty meetings, during in-service days, and in leadership roles (events); and reviewed school improvement plans, staff development plans, meeting agendas, and standardized test scores (artifacts). Combining these strategies

allowed me to triangulate the data, thus strengthening the research design.

Sample Selection

Merriam (1998) describes characteristics of qualitative research study samples as “small, nonrandom, purposeful, and theoretical” (p. 9). Accordingly, I chose a limited number of participants for the study. Glesne (1992) warns that having too many participants in a study can lead to less depth in any single case. Based on this, three principals and one superintendent were selected for the study, along with one alternate principal. Participants for this qualitative study were successful principals assigned to schools in a selected district of a school system that educates a large number of children whose parents serve in the United States military. To select the sample of principals for the study, I consulted with the District Superintendent and explained the criteria for the participants. Three principals from the district were selected based on the following criteria: 1) completed a successful NCA accreditation visit within the last three years, 2) had an exceptional or commendable performance evaluation for school year 2006-2007, 3) served as an administrator within the district for a minimum of two years, 4) was identified by the superintendent as an educational leader. Once the principals were identified, they were contacted by phone to inquire about their willingness to participate in

the study. Then, the appropriate signatures for system headquarters and IRB approval were procured.

Creswell (2007), as well as Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) suggest that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to achieve different perspectives on the research topic. Accordingly, the three principals selected for the study were leaders at three different grade levels. Diverse in gender, age, and ethnicity, the principals also served in a variety of school sizes and socio-economic compositions. Two of the principals have earned masters degrees and have recently begun doctoral studies. The third principal has earned a PhD. All principals are serving in the selected district. Principal A is currently the principal of a small high school. Principal B is serving at a small middle school. Principal C is leading a large elementary school.

The decision to include both elementary and secondary principals in this study was also purposeful. The reasons for this decision were: (a) the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and district school improvement liaison work with both elementary and secondary schools; (b) identified strategies and qualities of successful principals may apply to various grade levels; and (c) it is hoped that these discoveries can be utilized by other principals.

This qualitative case study analyzed how three successful principals in schools from the selected district lead school improvement. The three principals, serving as expert informants, comprised a purposive convenience sample selected from many successful principals in the school system.

Data Collection

Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that events, settings, actors, and artifacts must be considered in planning a successful study. They suggest that while few sites or individuals need be studied in qualitative analysis, extensive data about a particular participant or site may ultimately yield more data. Four data sources were included in this qualitative study. These sources included interviews with the district superintendent, interviews with three successful principals in the district, observations of the three principals in the school setting, and collection of school- and district-level artifacts. The data used in this study were from a large school system educating children whose parents serve in the United States military. At the request of the participating school system's Institutional Review Board, these sources will not be cited in this paper. Following is an explanation of how the data were collected.

Superintendent Interview

Initial interviews began with the district superintendent. The purposes of these interviews were two-fold. First, I sought the district superintendent's assistance in identifying suitable candidates for participation in the study. In 2007 the district superintendent was asked to identify a pool of at least four principals who met the criteria for participation in the study. While I planned to use three of the suggested nominees, one participant was maintained as an alternate in case of the unlikely event that any of the three participants found it necessary to withdraw from the study or decline participation. Over the

summer of 2008, the previous superintendent moved and a new superintendent (who had previously served as an assistant superintendent) was promoted to the position of district superintendent. During a subsequent interview, I asked the new district superintendent questions related to their expectations of principals concerning leadership in school improvement and support of school improvement efforts (See Appendix A). Questions were open-ended and written to solicit as much information as possible from the superintendent's perspective. Once this information was collected and permissions were granted to interview the principals, dates were set for the first round of principal interviews and observations.

Principal Interviews

Prior to interviews with the principals, participants were asked to send me electronic copies of their resumes. This gave me a concise record of their professional experiences and educational backgrounds. It also provided me insights that were helpful to know prior to the interviews and ensured time efficiency during the interview process. Principals selected for interviews provided knowledge about leadership in school improvement from their own unique, personal perspectives. I used a few, broad questions to solicit information in semi-structured interviews (See Appendix B). Questions were designed to solicit information within the frames of Bolman and Deal's (2002) reframing model. Formal interviews were audio taped and then later transcribed. While interviews were based on a written interview protocol,

qualitative research lent itself to developing the direction of the question according to the initial answer of the participant.

As a researcher trying to make meaning of school improvement leadership, I was the primary instrument for collecting data (Merriam, 1998). Accordingly, while conducting research interviews I practiced my best listening skills in order to collect as much information as possible and then drew themes and conclusions from the data. This data included not only words, but also nuances such as body language, facial expressions, pauses, sighs, and vocal intonation. Phoenix (1994) emphasizes the importance of developing rapport with the participants in a study. When participants are at ease, they may provide more quality, useful information. Additionally, the establishment of good relations between the researcher and the participants may help create an intimacy that supports a balance of power. I sought to build rapport with the participants in the study. I had previously worked with the interviewees in my capacity as district school improvement liaison and shared comfortable working relations with all principals in the district. This, then, led to my next challenge as a researcher, that of setting aside or bracketing any pre-conceived notions (Mousakas, 1994; Merriam, 1998).

Glesne (2006) offers much good advice concerning interviews. As an interviewer, I had to remember that “feedback is both verbal and nonverbal” (p. 92). I understood that my reaction to interview questions could influence the depth and/or honesty of subsequent answers. Remembering the questions, rather than constantly having to refer to

notes, led to a more comfortable setting for the interviews. It was my responsibility to set the tone for a good quality experience for participants, including control of my emotions and keeping track of valuable time. I recognized that time is a valuable commodity in schools. My role was nondirective, devoid of my perspective and open to the experiences and beliefs of the interviewees. Complete concentration was necessary for me to gather the most helpful information from the interviews. At times, I had to probe to obtain accurate information and increase wait time. Merriam (1998) believes "that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 1).

Participants in this study choose what information they wished to share. They signed an informed consent form stating their participation was voluntary. There was no negative consequence for non-participation in the study. Data collected will in no way affect a participant's performance appraisal. Participants have the right to drop out of the study or not answer particular questions that are posed. If any of the three participants had chosen to drop out of the study, a suitable replacement would have been chosen from an alternate pool. Alternates were suggested by the superintendent, using the same criteria as the original participants. Participants were referred to only as

elementary school principal, middle school principal, and high school principal to protect their identities. This study was designed to contribute to knowledge and posed minimal risk to participants. The only cost to participants was their valuable time; I, as the researcher, was well prepared for the interviews and traveled to the school sites for interviews in order to limit this cost to interviewees.

I conducted and made audio recordings of interviews, and then used coding to find themes. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (Frank & Wallen, 1990; Merriam, 1988). As such, I attempted to make meaning of the interviewees' experiences and the structures of their jobs as principals. Through these interviews, I was able to gather a historical perspective on the principals' leadership and have some control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 1994).

Artifact Collection

In order to get the "big picture" of the principals' leadership in the schools, I collected artifacts from the principals to triangulate data. Merriam (1998) suggests that documents provide data that verify emerging hypotheses, as well as advancing new ideas. They often track development and offer an historical understanding. Documents provide stability and are unobtrusive; they are not affected by the investigator or reactive to the research process. Prior to interviews, principals were contacted and asked to provide these documents upon my arrival at the schools. This included school improvement team agendas, school improvement plans, faculty meeting

agendas, and professional development day agendas. I accessed the schools' test scores for school years 2007 and 2008, looking for progress in highest student achievement. Acknowledging test scores are only one way we know students have learned, I incorporated a question about student success into the interviews. Artifacts such as school test scores, school improvement agendas, and school improvement plans were also collected as relevant data. Results were provided in a descriptive, narrative format. Through this study of successful principals in the selected district educating military dependents, I hoped to better understand their leadership in the school improvement process. This knowledge will be especially helpful in assisting schools in their striving to meet goals set forth in the Community Strategic Plan.

Observations of Principals

To provide additional data and add to the trustworthiness of the study, I made at least two one-hour observations of principals in their natural school environments. One of these observations was made prior to the interview of the principal; the other was made after the interview. By observing faculty meetings, professional development days, and interactions with students, parents, and teachers, I saw first-hand how these principals operated within their schools and communities. I made multiple trips to each school, thus adding continuity to the study. The principals were assured that these observations and the resulting fieldnotes would in no way be used in their performance appraisals, but rather to collect data. In order to collect data in

an organized manner, I took field notes on a spreadsheet that reflected the Bolman and Deal (2002) framework of political, human resource, symbolic, and structural elements (see Appendix C). I recorded observed sights and sounds, conversations, relevant quotes, and displays of information germane to school improvement leadership.

Data Analysis

"Data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 151). During interviews, insights began to emerge. Tentative hypotheses led to reformulation of questions and interpretations of perceptions. Findings eventually evolved as a result of this interactive process. In order to make sense of the triangulated data, Firestone (1987) suggests, "telling quotes from interviews, a description of agency staffing patterns and excerpts from agency history . . . The details are convincing, because they create a gestalt that makes sense to the reader" (p. 152). In this particular study, the interview data complete with "telling quotes," observations, school test score data, and artifacts led to finding patterns and themes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the importance of establishing conceptual frameworks as a defense against information overload in qualitative studies. As more data piled up during the course of a study, the more confusing the process became. The emerging task was sorting what mattered from what did not matter. Accordingly, I chose to use the research of Bolman and Deal (1998) as a framework for analyzing the data collected.

Bolman and Deal proffer the lenses of human resources, structure, symbols, and politics to examine how selected successful leaders lead an organization. Once the interview data were transcribed and observation data were collected in the form of field notes, I allowed a period of one month for the data to "rest." Then I began the process of open coding. "Coding is analysis" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Codes are labels used for assigning meaning to words, sentences, or phrases connected to an idea. This involved a meticulous examination of the "fat" data, searching for common threads in the essence of information collected. To accomplish this, I used colored tabs and various colors of highlighters to identify shared meanings, and then made connections through a process of sorting and arranging of key words and phrases on cards that were color-coded according to the four Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002) frames of human resource, structural, symbolic, and political. Using a reflective process, I continued to combine and rearrange bits of information until I achieved an analysis product that accounted for all perspectives. These key words and ideas were then organized into spreadsheets in order to visualize connections (Appendices G through O). Creswell (2007) refers to this process as horizontalization. Data from interviews, observations, and artifacts were considered in the analysis. Finally, I then used the Bolman and Deal framework as an overlay to discover how principals in the selected district lead the process of school improvement within the overseas military environment. Once the meanings were extracted from the data, they were written up in a rich description.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was accomplished by crosschecking sources of information, or triangulating (Glesne, 2006; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Multiple sources of data were used for this study, including interviews with the superintendent, interviews with the successful principals, principal observation field notes, and artifacts from the schools and district. “In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2007, p.208). As a further measure to increase trustworthiness, member checking was used (Glesne, 2006; Schwandt, 2001). After transcripts and field notes were drafted, interviewees had the opportunity to check them for accuracy. Additionally, prolonged contact with the participants and observations contributed to trustworthiness (Glesne, 2006). In summary, triangulation, crosschecking, and prolonged contact with participants contributed to the trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

In order to address the research question of “How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?” I used qualitative methodology to gather data from multiple sources. I conducted interviews with the district superintendent and successful principals. Additionally, I observed experienced, successful principals in their natural school settings, recorded field notes, reviewed artifacts from

schools, recorded and analyzed data, and sought to find themes in the data. Open coding was used in data analysis to make meaning of the principals' experiences in leading school improvement in this unique overseas military environment. This chapter has addressed the methodology of the study, to include sample selection, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Findings of the Study

Introduction

This chapter will describe the data collected to respond to the research question of “How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?” In order to organize and make sense of the deluge of data collected from multiple sources for the study, I looked to the research of Glesne (2006), Creswell (2007), and Miles and Huberman (1994). Their descriptions of data gathering, coding, and theme finding were most helpful in the process. Stake’s (1995) research tips helped me clarify the process of disassembling and reassembling the data in order to analyze in meaningful ways.

The chapter will open with a description of the school improvement plans of all three schools included in the study. These artifacts include school goals, interventions, data sources to show academic growth of students, and staff development plans. This will serve to set the context for the study (Merriam, 1988). In the selected school system, the area office provides a template for school improvement plans in the districts under its auspices. Schools are asked to complete a five-year long-range school improvement plan (SIP) during the first year of the North Central Association (NCA) cycle. Throughout the five years, the school may make modifications in the interventions and staff development plans, but the goals and essence are to remain the same. School faculties come to consensus on two data-based

goals during the first year of the cycle, also known as the profile year. During this year, the school develops a profile, exploring and documenting as much data as possible from all stakeholders to determine appropriate goals. The profile serves to “assist the school stakeholders in developing an understanding of the environment in which the school operates, the performance of levels of students, perceptions and expectations of parents and community members, and other important factors that impact teaching and learning (NCA-CASI, 2001, p. 1).”

Secondly, a brief analysis of the system-wide test scores for the three schools of participating successful principals is presented. The school system derives data from annual administration of the *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition for grades three through eleven. Published by CTB McGraw-Hill, this normative instrument is designed to assess reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The total score is an average of reading, language arts, and mathematics portions of the test. Scores are most often reported in a national percentile format, although they are also available as national curve equivalents (NCE). The *Teacher’s Guide to TerraNova, Third Edition*, explains the national percentile score as, “One of the 99 point scores that divide a ranked distribution into groups, each of which contains 1/100 of the scores (p. 326).” For example, the eighty-second percentile denotes the point or score below which 82 percent “of the scores fall in a particular distribution of scores. A national percentile score is the percent of students in a national representative group whose scores fall below

a particular student's score (p. 326). By contrast, "the normal curve equivalent (NCE) score, ranging from 1 to 99, coincides with the national percentile scale at 1, 50, and 99. NCEs have the additional advantage of being based on an equal-interval scale (p. 325). Because the distance between any two successive scores on the scale is equal, you can make meaningful comparisons of test batteries.

Next, interview data will provide self-reported themes reflecting the leadership philosophies and practices of the school principals (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). I will then present rich descriptive data resulting from observations of elementary, middle school, and high school principals. As suggested by Creswell (2007), the data was first reviewed for a within-case analysis, followed by cross-case analysis. The order of these three data points was carefully crafted according to logical order based on advice from qualitative researcher Glesne (2006). The order proceeds from written documentation (what was projected as a plan for school improvement leadership) to interviews (what is being done to lead school improvement, according to the principals) to observations (what an outside researcher sees as evidence of school improvement leadership).

The theoretical underpinnings of Bolman and Deal's (1997, 2002) reframing theories were used to describe themes found in the study. This framework provides four lenses for studying leadership issues as follows: structural frame, human resource frame, political frame, and symbolic frame. This study applies these frameworks to all three data points—the School

Improvement Plan and system-wide assessment documents, the interviews, and the observations, thus providing continuity and logical structure.

Descriptive Information (Artifacts)

Elementary School SIP

At the elementary school, the principal selected for this study came to leadership during year two of the NCA cycle. Because he did not believe the previously set goals accurately reflected the available data used to choose goals, he changed the goals for the NCA cycle. The two current goals are “All students will demonstrate an improved ability to comprehend text in all curricular areas” and “All students will demonstrate improvement in the areas of math problem solving and math communication across the curriculum.” The reading goal was determined based on scores from *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition; Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI); and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores, as well as from the environmental scan of twenty-first century skills (Marx, 2000). The math goal was chosen as a result of examination of the Objective Performance Index (OPI) from *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition. The OPI breaks down subject areas into skills and subskills. For example, the area of math would be broken down into areas such as math communication, problem solving, measurement, and math communication. As reflected in the school improvement plan, the goals are then compared to system-wide standards to see how the interventions will be matched to the curriculum.

NCA recommends research-based interventions to address school goals. For the reading goal, the elementary school is using silent sustained reading, Scholastic's Reading Counts program, and Four Block Literacy Model (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 2008). The current school improvement plan includes "Bobcat" math, a locally developed intervention to encourage parents to help with math literacy homework and development of math skills; specific math manipulative activities adapted from AIMS (Activities that Integrate Math and Science) Education Foundation training; and math journaling.

A review of the staff development section of the school improvement plan reveals a focus on quality staff development efforts. Teachers develop their annual professional growth plans to mirror the school improvement goals, thus strengthening the effort. Data are examined at regular intervals to motivate staff members and encourage growth. Leadership of the school improvement process is facilitated by the principal, but often co-led by faculty members or continuous school progress chairpersons. Expertise is sought both within and outside of the school, importing district support personnel as well as professional staff developers.

A review of staff development day agendas for the past two years shows moderate support of school improvement topics based on the AdvancED standards. However, there is a focus on better teaching and learning, undoubtedly a cornerstone standard. The design of the professional development day mini-workshops allows for choice and variety in the day;

unfortunately, the structure days does not necessarily persuade some less motivated teachers to take the high road as they opt instead—literally, for the bad minton session designed to enhance faculty wellness. The principal has a clear vision of trying to create a learning community (DuFour & Eaker; 1998, 2004), but faces obstacles from a core of seasoned teachers. Although the principal is not personally fond of using technology, technology is infused throughout the staff development plan and widely used by teachers in the school. Staff development days contribute to meaningful, ongoing staff development and the building of a learning community at the elementary school.

Elementary School Standardized Test Data

A study of the elementary school results (Appendix D) from the 2006-2008 *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition reveals several areas that are marked for improvement through the school improvement plan process. In this school system, students first participate in this assessment at grade three. Granted, many third graders are unaccustomed to taking standardized tests, but this assessment is normed with other third graders across America who may or may not have previously participated in an achievement test. Both in 2007 and 2008, third graders as a group did not meet the benchmarks established by the school system in any subject area. At the fourth grade level, results reveal improvement in social studies, but missed the mark in both reading and language arts—areas targeted by the school's goals. Results are more promising for the fifth grade, meeting

benchmark goals in reading, language arts, science, social studies, and very nearly in math on the 2008 assessment. The argument can be made that by the time a core group of students has been in the school for three years, the interventions begin to make a difference. However, since no cohort data base has been established, only program data are available. This method of examining data has been adopted by the school system to gauge progress toward Community Strategic Plan benchmarks of less than seven percent of students in the bottom quartile and at least 75% of students in the top two quartiles combined.

Middle School SIP

Using data collected for the school profile in 2006, leaders at the middle school brought the faculty to consensus on the two goals that follow: (a) Improve reading comprehension across the curriculum and (b) Improve math skills across the curriculum. The reading goal stems from review of data provided by the *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition, Scholastic Reading Inventory scores, and an environmental scan of 21st century learning skills. The faculty chose research-based interventions to address their goal, including Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID)-endorsed strategies of Cornell Notes, SQ3R, and Vocabulary building using graphic organizers. The math goal was derived from *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition data, as well as scores from the Star Math program and an environmental scan of 21st century learning skills (Marx,

2000). Interventions to address math goals are graphic organizers, response writing for math communication, and measurement activities.

The staff development plan reveals that the staff was trained in the interventions before implementing the strategies in the classrooms; this is essential for successful implementation. Also apparent in the staff development plan is the balance of leadership for school improvement. Some activities are led by the principal, others by faculty members and CSP chairpersons. A review of faculty meeting and staff development day agendas shows that topics are relevant to school improvement, broadly supporting the AdvancED standards for successful schools. Specific activities on professional development days include review of NCA findings/next steps from the previous NCA visit; This is a requirement to ensure that the school uses feedback from the accrediting agency to make meaningful improvements. The faculty addressed common vocabulary for mathematics and agreed on common assessment vocabulary. Graphic organizer training helped staff members design tools that could be immediately applied to their teaching. In the area of math, the staff discussed how they could implement the objective of measurement across the curriculum. Finally, a representative from the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) worked with the staff on how to stay connected with students and military families during deployment. Technology was included throughout the staff development plan; an example of this is SMARTBoard™ training for the teachers. Staff development days, faculty meetings, SILT meetings, and departmental meetings all contribute to

meaningful, ongoing staff development and the development of a learning community at the middle school.

Middle School Standardized Test Data

A study of the middle school results (Appendix E) from the 2006-2008 *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition reveals progress mostly at the eighth grade level. As with the fifth grade scores, this would be the third year students were in middle school, provided they did not move. Mobility rate for military schools is approximately 30 percent (district document, March 2008). Reading and language arts scores at the sixth grade level showed a decrease in the number of students in the fourth quartile. However, in mathematics the number of students in the fourth quartile rose substantially. Both science and social studies saw a decrease in the number of students in the bottom quartile over the three-year period. In seventh grade, a higher percentage of students succumbed to the lowest quartile in reading, language arts, and math, but improved in science and social studies. The eighth grade students showed some improvement in reading, math, and social studies, but lost ground in science. With this data in mind, it is recommended that schools review all available data and adjust the interventions set forth in the school improvement plan to support student success.

High School SIP

The high school staff used data from a locally developed teacher survey; Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Tests (PSAT); *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition; and the System-wide Communication Arts

Test to determine their first goal of “All students will improve their writing skills across the curriculum.” The same data sources provided further support for a second goal of “All students will improve their critical thinking skills throughout all curricular areas.” The environmental scan of 21st century learning skills (Marx, 2000) also lent support to these goal selections. In addition to identifying two cognitive goals for students, the school leadership recognized—through a study of disaggregated data—the need for an additional (optional) third affective goal. They chose to address the gender gap in achievement at the school. For all goals, the school identified clear connections to the curriculum standards and their mission statement. Interventions were based on best practices found in research; for the writing goal this included Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) to expose students to various types of writing, use of graphic organizers, use of rubrics to holistically score writing, and using student work samples to teach writing. Addressing the critical thinking goal required development of a teaching model. After the staff provided sufficient research on critical thinking, they came to consensus on the use of a “FOCUS” strategy: Follow directions, Organize, Clarify, Use logic, Synthesize. The school leaders distribute gender-bias in education literature and demonstrate teaching strategies that help close the gender gap.

High School Standardized Test Data

A study of the middle school results (Appendix E) from the 2006-2008 *TerraNova,* Multiple Assessments, Second Edition reveals progress most evident in the area of reading in all grade levels. Language arts, mathematics,

and science scores at the eleventh grade are a cause for concern, as the percentage of students in the fourth quartile increases over the three year period. Tenth grade students showed the most stability across the three year period, boasting 17 areas where the system's Community Strategic Plan benchmarks were met. With the exception of science and reading, the ninth grade classes need exposure to powerful interventions to achieve success. The school improvement plan does provide for interventions to improve critical thinking and writing, which could address the mathematics and language arts deficits, given rigorous interventions.

Staff development days at the high school provide genuine opportunities for learning from guest presenters, leaders, and peers. The agendas of the past two years' staff development days reflect variety in presentation methods and span a wide array of interests. Some of the specific topics addressing data during professional development days included the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test results review and analyzing the differences between *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments Second Edition and Third Edition. Teachers worked collaboratively to develop their own writing rubric for use on a local assessment. They also experimented with several different styles of graphic organizers for teaching the writing process. In the area of critical thinking, the school adopted the use of "FOCUS", an acronym for *Follow directions, Organize Clarify Use logic,* and *Synthesize*. Furthermore, technology use is integrated into the presentations and modeled by the school leaders. To address the gender achievement gap, each teacher

keeps a gender equity portfolio and faculty meetings include a gender equity minute. Faculty meetings are well organized and follow a previously published agenda; all staff members have the opportunity to submit items to be included on the agenda. Reportedly, attendance is good on staff development days and during monthly faculty meetings. Departmental meetings are also a time of sharing among colleagues. Staff development days, faculty meetings, SILT meetings, and departmental meetings all contribute to meaningful, ongoing staff development and the growth of a learning community at the high school.

Interview Data

The Superintendent

The purpose of the interview with the superintendent was to get a clear picture of what is expected of principals concerning their leadership roles in school improvement. Based on our conversation and a review of the administrator performance appraisal, the school system holds high expectations of not only their students, but also of their principals. The superintendent's vision is that all students in the district will be academically successful. Therefore, the belief is held that school improvement should be based on promoting achievement. This is evident in the district's mission statement, "Promoting Student Success—Preventing Student Failure" (district website). Principals must clearly communicate their visions of excellence to stakeholders; the school vision should be in harmony with the goals of the district, area, and school system's Community Strategic Plan.

To ensure student success, the principal must exercise data-driven decision making. Principal evaluations confirm that as educational leaders they are expected to collect, analyze and utilize data from standardized testing as well as student performance for decision making. The principal must constantly evaluate both programs and practices in order to promote continuous improvement. The superintendent explains that student data can be a source of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction for students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Dissatisfaction can sometimes motivate students and teachers to improve performance. Student data lead schools to set goals that are attainable and measurable; these goals and our approaches to them become increasingly more sophisticated and challenging as we progress in our knowledge of the AdvancED model for school improvement. School improvement is, above all, a continuous process and requires that schools maintain documentation of evidence such as assessment data, agendas, and student work samples.

As the educational leaders, principals work collaboratively with teachers to develop and implement an effective school improvement plan that is based on effective instruction and student achievement. This plan, which includes both long- and short-range goals, must then be communicated to the parents and community. Finally, the effectiveness of the interventions toward the school goals must be monitored to be sure programs and services are in place to meet student as well as family needs. Special circumstances, such as deployments and reintegration, may require special considerations for

military families. According to the superintendent, the school system includes many elements of leadership in their evaluation of principals.

While principals facilitate school improvement, shared leadership should occur to build momentum. In fact, the administrator performance appraisal urges principals to provide leadership position opportunities for staff members, effectively sharing the responsibility for school success. It is crucial that principals meaningfully involve faculty members in the school improvement process. In order to do this, principals must possess and develop leadership skills. The superintendent believes that principals should develop professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 2006) where the principal is responsible for leadership and planning. The principal sets the framework for motivating, encouraging, and celebrating effective instruction and highest student achievement.

Principals must be knowledgeable about curriculum standards as well as student support programs in order to be educational leaders. They are expected to be aware of current educational research and share best practices with their teachers. Developing learning communities in schools requires careful planning and implementation of effective staff development that address the school improvement goals. This plan is based on the needs of students as evident in school data.

Staff members need support from principals for their professional development activities, both within and outside of the school. The successful principal also supports staff members in their quests to take risks with

innovative teaching practices. “Promoting Student Success—Preventing Student Failure”—that’s what our schools are all about. The bottom line is that the schools must be organized for performance; our management systems promote this structure. The purpose of the district is to support the schools.

The Elementary School Principal

The elementary principal commented that he appreciated the interview as an opportunity for professional reflection. As a principal, he works with others informally, is responsive, available, and approachable—at ease in finding common ground for holding conversations with others. Working with difficult people causes him to take pause and evaluate whether the situation at hand is a professional or personal problem; this will determine the course of action taken. In the personal realm, the principal follows Covey’s model in remembering “first things first”. He also applies Maslow’s Hierarchy, remembering that we must feel safe and have personal needs met in our environment to progress to achievement. If a problem is professional in nature, the principal provides appropriate support and offers to solve the problem together. He candidly puts emotions on the table at the beginning of the conversation, recognizing that the situation is going to cause some discomfort for all participants, and invites a witness to attend any potentially difficult situations.

Concerning the elementary principal’s method for change influence, he unabashedly reveals that he is manipulative. He incorporates lobbying by others to promote his causes and uses flattery to make people think an idea

was their own. These manipulative techniques are part of his arsenal-for-change weaponry. Charismatic by nature, the principal is adept at wooing support for effective change to support student success. When asked what best prepared him for his role as principal, he replied, “Being a janitor. It taught me humility.”

The elementary principal sports casual dress as a representation of his comfort for leading the school. Celebrations and rituals are frequent as both formal and informal get-togethers encourage collegiality at the school. There is a certain open-door informality that pervades the building. Although many other office spaces are available, the principal chooses to strategically place his desk squarely in the center of the main office, the hub of the school, visually illustrating to all that enter his openness to communication. It is no wonder, then, that this man’s vision for the ideal school is “an open, friendly, music/art-filled school where people are celebrated for their contributions and high test scores are a function of what we are doing.” The elementary principal sees data as being indicative of both student and teacher performance. He endorses Real Time Strategic Change (Jacobs, 1997) methodology for bringing about gradual change. This involves reviewing what the school is proud of, what challenges exist, and what the next steps should be. In order for school improvement to be successful, it must include everyone, be responsive to the needs of individuals, and occur over time. He recognizes that, especially in a large school, this is a hard climb. This climb can not, however, be done alone. Military and community partnerships

provide support for the school by participating in organized team sports, monitoring the playground, volunteering as tutors, and making meaningful contributions that produce results. Community volunteers are more than mere visitors; they are genuine volunteers.

Community members, including parents, enter a school that is visually filled with wonder. The lobby is welcoming, decked out with homey furnishings, student-produced stained glass windows, a wide-screen television displaying student activities, lush green plants, a vintage oriental carpet, twinkling lights, and soothing music. Using the methods of invitational education, the principal has produced an environment that calms visitors and children alike, inviting them to become friendly, happy bobcats, just as the school mascot symbolizes. Teachers, too, are happy bobcats when they receive a note from the office printed on blue paper. The positive blue paper color echoes a complimentary comment from the principal.

The political make-up of the school demands good results and performance-driven management, which the principal intends to deliver. While the principal prefers first names and no titles, he recognizes that not everyone is comfortable with that level of familiarity. Not only does this savvy principal respond to the needs of his students, teachers, and staff, but he also recognizes that he must respond to the political needs of the system. To do this, he emphasizes the importance of knowing the rules and regulations, as well as at times having to support the greater good of the organization. The military restructuring causes concern and a certain degree of instability; this

cannot be ignored. Uncertainty about pending school closures is on the minds of all teachers and many parents. To counteract this effect, the principal strives to be transparent with information, sharing available information or the lack thereof. He suggests using rumors to your advantage by planting positive information. The elementary principal is aware of the internal and external politics of the school. He recognizes that this is the real world for students, so we must teach them the skills they need for now, not for “their futures.” To do this, he promotes students-based learning that is appropriate for a kid’s environment. The school’s student recognition program rewards students with appreciation for their work through the Star Day Assembly and exemplary work walls. The elementary school principal summarized, “In the end, it’s all about the kids.”

The Middle School Principal

The middle school principal describes several traits she sees as necessary to be a successful principal. Among these are compassionate, caring, nice, and positive. She stresses the importance of meeting individuals where they are and validating people. To promote this, the principal sends staff members Friday reflections and leaves hand-written notes when visiting classrooms. When faced with a conflict, she pauses to evaluate what has caused the difficulty and tries to treat people fairly, brainstorming with them, listening, and empathizing, while exercising a great deal of patience. The middle school principal believes that leaders are born and that the best preparation for being a principal is on-the-job training.

Because a declining population leaves the principal with no assistant principal, she must carefully structure her solo supervision of faculty, the office staff, and clubs/organizations. Her vision of “We’re on the road to success—no matter what it takes” focuses squarely on kids. The middle school depends on military partnerships for dances, mentors, lunchroom supervision, and sporting events. She also credits Youth Services for supporting the students with homework club and art/music lessons after school hours. During school hours, students are prepared for the future with rigorous instruction in such offerings as creative thinking, gifted education, Accelerated Reading, Accelerated Math, Star Math, READ 180, AVID, and Algebra 1 for eighth graders. Vocational classes such as family and consumer science, video production, and technology are also part of the curriculum. Awards ceremonies are held regularly to recognize achievement and improvement of Mustangs, the school mascot that symbolizes strength.

The principal finds the resilience of military children to be amazing. While families are transient and deployments exert pressure on the adolescents, the students succeed despite obstacles. The school is not immune to political influence, but it can be a positive force. Thanks to military support, the school is fully staffed. The principal recommends working closely with the teachers’ union when making decisions. She also acknowledges that the school staff consists of in-groups and out-groups, but seeks to be inclusive of all faculty members. The school invites parent input on decision making through monthly meetings of the School Advisory Council (SAC).

School programs and management are also driven by weekly directives published by the area office. In conclusion, the principal promotes a positive school climate while making sure the school continues to be performance-driven.

The High School Principal

Within the human resource frame, the high school principal attributes her success to the fact that she gets to know her staff on an intimate level, making a connection by taking personal interest. By doing this, she makes it clear that she is “not out to get anyone.” The principal leads by example, setting high expectations and conveying a non-threatening nature. She spends a great deal of time and effort supporting the success of the faculty by affording them opportunities to observe best practices of fellow educators, supporting networking, offering training opportunities, providing positive feedback, differentiating motivation, and acknowledging successes. To prepare for a career as a successful principal, this high school administrator participated in a university internship. She also credits excellent mentors who explained rationale for their decisions and explained their thought processes; this gave her a broader perspective of what it means to be a successful administrator. A split teaching/administrative assignment early in her career provided the opportunity for the principal to experience empathy as she served dual roles. The principal emphasizes the value of having a trusted colleague with whom she can discuss issues. She advises that efficient time

management and good organizational skills are essential if you hope to carve out time for yourself, which every administrator needs to do for good health.

The principal believes the physical environment of the school signals to a community whether or not they are sending children to a quality school. Renovations and improved cleanliness of the physical building have influenced how the staff and community perceive this high school. Parents want to send their children to a clean, safe, attractive environment. Teachers and students see this as a place where teaching and learning will be celebrated. When the principal came to this school, she implemented a new school culture by training the office staff on improved customer service. By behaving and dressing professionally, the office staff provides the initial impression that a leader would expect. Visitors to the school are met with a warm greeting in a clean, neat environment. Instantly, there is an ethos of teamwork among the office staff, teachers, and administrators.

Many structures are in place to support student success in the selected high school. A clear purpose is set for meetings that are called at the school on a regular, predictable basis. A weekly rotation of instructional leader, faculty, departmental, and school improvement leadership meetings provides the setting for meaningful staff development. Meetings are well planned and organized, making efficient use of time for all participants. The student success team (SST) meets weekly to focus on at-risk students, as well as monitor and intervene to ensure progress. Another support structure in place for students is Tuesday/Thursday scholars, a program for students who need

additional individual instruction. The GradeSpeed™ program allows students and parents alike to regularly monitor academic progress in all classes. In keeping with her vision of “High expectations for the students and school,” the high school principal regularly reviews D/F lists with counselors and teachers and meets with at-risk seniors every week to discuss their academic progress. Both total school data and individual student data are analyzed and shared appropriately (on a need-to-know basis with confidentiality as a stipulation). The principal regularly reviews grades of seniors and communicates with parents about their progress. All of these structures are in place with student success as the ultimate outcome.

The high school principal points out that many other programs are in place at this high school to promote student success. A program named “Beyond the Bison Years” prepares both college and career-bound students for the future. College preparation, financial support for college, getting a driver’s license (American students in this country do not commonly hold a driver’s license until they return to America), setting up bank accounts, and renting an apartment are among the topics found on the agendas for this program run by community volunteers. To assist students in making transitions, college night, new student orientation, AVID, ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) testing, and My Road programs are promoted. The school boasts a low pupil-teacher ratio, free healthy snacks in the office, and a clean, safe environment. Student leadership opportunities include student council, class officers, peer tutoring, and JROTC. The school

also offers vocational classes in cosmetology, JROTC, video production, computer systems repair, and computer-aided design (CAD). The curriculum is based on system-wide standards which parallel many stateside standards. Student excellence is recognized through awards assemblies, academic competitions, and National Honor Society.

The high school principal indicates that there is no denying the political influence of the military in this school system. Mutual support between the school and military command is key to student success. In the military, mission comes first. To be a successful principal of a school educating many children whose parents are in the military, one must become an active voice in the community and participate in community affairs. Another political influence on the school is the district office. Building networks with district and area personnel can yield support from higher levels; benefits often result from informal conversations. A savvy principal is always prepared with a shopping list in the event unexpected funds are available on short notice. She also keeps superiors informed of school business affairs, as no one likes unpleasant surprises. Communication is key with those you are supervising as well as those supervising you. The principal advises being beyond reproach with ethics and practicing mutual respect at all times, shunning hidden agendas or manipulation. Political influence is a reality in all schools; it is how you approach this influence that determines your success as a leader.

Helping others recognize the need for change may indeed be one of the greatest challenges school principals face (Hall & Hord, 1993; Fullan,

2003). The high school principal participating in this study acknowledges that many people experience discomfort with change, but change is necessary to make progress. She suggests that changes in the school improvement process be made gradually. The key is to influence—not force—change. Change is made easier with the help of partnerships. The high school's volunteer military unit provides support for college night, sporting events, homecoming festivities, and the graduation ceremony. The School Liaison Officer provides an essential bridge between the school and military community. A persistent, positive public relationships campaign enlists community support of the school and builds a positive reputation of the school. Positive communications from school newsletter and even more importantly word of mouth have greatly improved community perceptions of the school. Pristine purple, white, and gold tiles line the hallways of this high school while spirit wear mirrors the school colors. A mighty Bison, the symbol of pride, is seen not only guarding the entry to the school, but on spirit wear and the bumpers of cars in the community. It is evident that there is some truth to the high school's motto, "You just can't hide that Bison pride."

Observations of Principals

As described in Chapter Three Methodology, three successful principals were observed in leadership roles at the school sites. Previous to the observations, principals were called and asked about dates and times for upcoming faculty or school improvement leadership team meetings.

Arrangements were subsequently made for me to visit the schools. Prior to the observations, phone calls were made to confirm the appointments.

Elementary Principal, Observation 1

On September 24, 2008, I observed a school improvement leadership team (SILT) meeting at the elementary school. The meeting began shortly after the final school bell rang, dismissing the students. The principal made an announcement over the intercom, inviting all SILT members and any other interested parties to attend. In attendance were the principal, one of two assistant principals, two co-school improvement teacher leaders, and a teacher designated as the public affairs point of contact for the school. The meeting was held in the parent center, a room designated for parent volunteers to organize their efforts. Attendees enjoyed snacks around a round table as the meeting began.

The principal had prepared for the meeting by posting an agenda with "big picture" items outlined. The objectives of the meeting were obvious. The pending AdvancED school visit slated for 2010 set a sense of urgency for progress. The principal used the model of "Where are we now? /Where do we need to be?" to guide discussion. Using this framework, the group discussed goals, interventions, and assessments. Once the current state was examined, the group, with the leadership of the principal, designed the best use of the October 10, 2008 professional development day. A graphic organizer drawn on a chart showed possible topics, including reading, math, parents, technology, climate, communication, and internal customer service. The

format of the agenda incorporated variety in the day and choices of sessions for faculty members.

Throughout the meeting, the principal kept the group on task and led, but did not dominate, the discussion. He stood in front of the group, physically showing who was in charge. His casual manner and dress leant a comfortable atmosphere within which the group shared ideas and suggestions. Various colors of markers were used to complete the graphic organizer chart, incorporating the contributions of the SILT. The principal paused appropriately to allow all team members time to react and speak. Once the objectives of the meeting were met, the principal thanked the team members and they left. He assured them that a draft of the October 10, 2008 agenda would be sent out to the SILT before it was published to the entire faculty. The meeting ended after approximately 45 minutes.

Reviewing the elements of this principal observation through the lenses provided by Bolman and Deal's (1997, 2002) framework for leadership gives us insight into what makes the principal successful in leading school improvement. In the human relations frame, we note that an invitation was announced on the intercom for all interested parties to attend the meeting. Included in those attending were the school's public affairs representative, along with the assistance principal and two co-chairpersons. The meeting was held in the parent center, a room dedicated for parent volunteers. When parents know that a room is designated for them in the school, they feel a sense of belonging and increased importance; their efforts are validated.

Snacks and relaxed dress helped set a climate that encouraged open communication. The round table at which we met was symbolic of equal importance in communication; however, the fact that the principal stood front and center clarified that he was in charge of the meeting. The school's "customer base" is primarily dependents of the military, which sets the political frame in motion. An upcoming NCA visit scheduled for 2010 has increased the urgency for accountability and documentation of school improvement efforts. Both school level administrators, specifically the principal and assistant principal, and teachers are in attendance at this meeting, demonstrating a team approach to the tasks at hand. The presence of the district school improvement liaison adds support for the process.

Elementary Principal, Observation 2

The second observation of the elementary principal occurred during a professional development day on October 10, 2008. The principal, as well as faculty members enjoyed relaxed dress for the day. As previously mentioned, the day was planned to offer teaching professionals a wide variety of choices. With a teaching staff of over 100, a great deal of collaboration and planning is required to make a professional development day rewarding and interesting. Using a workshop format afforded this opportunity, but was possible only through utilizing school, district, and community resources. The day began with a "big picture" review of school improvement and AdvancED for all faculty members, including appraisal of the school's mission statement and goals, interventions used to teach math (one of the school's improvement

goals), and assessments used to measure progress toward goals. The principal co-presented this session with teacher leaders, employing hands-on demonstrations of toothpick math and a PowerPoint slideshow. The principal often employs real life examples and humor to cajole and motivate the staff. He offers the staff many opportunities to make decisions for the school, reserving only the most important decisions for administration. By doing this, the principal gives the faculty members voice and autonomy, while maintaining control of critical issues.

After an introduction and a short activity, a break was in order. Following the 15 minute break, groups dispersed to various locations throughout the school to attend one hour sessions based on their interests and needs. Adult learners as well as students require differentiated instruction. Work session 1 included a variety of choices, such as use of the SMARTBoard™, integrating technology into the classroom, a parent panel of spouses who have experienced the deployment of a family member, an informational session on how to use the new military gas ration card, or time to complete required online personnel training. At the conclusion of session 1, the faculty was treated to a fabulous luncheon spread, courtesy of the Parent Teacher Association. In the world of the rushed elementary school teacher, the relaxed lunch time provided the opportunity to network with colleagues and parents, while enjoying a healthy lunch.

The first afternoon session began at 1:00 and ended at 1:45. Choices for the afternoon included using word walls to promote literacy at all grade

levels; accessing the Rubicon Atlas program to streamline lessons, build classroom resources, and assess student learning; utilizing inquiry-based science curriculum; having fun with school improvement; facilitating reading games; tracking grades using the GradeSpeed™ program; guiding student reading; and keeping fit with bad minton. Sessions repeated during this time slot were using the new gas card and required online personnel training. A second, abbreviated afternoon session ran from 2:00 until 2:45. These sessions included self-selected reading, sweatin' to the oldies, online data bases, school-wide themes, GradeSpeed™, modeling thinking aloud, DRA training, student support teams. The perennial gas card training and online personnel training were also options for this session. At 2:45, all staff members met in the cafeteria for an afternoon wrap-up of the day, which concluded at 3:00. Faculty members left for the weekend with many ideas to reflect upon. Throughout the day, the principal circulated throughout the large school, checking in on the sessions. At the end of the day, he worked along with the assistant principals and several staff members to return equipment to original locations and prepare the school for business as usual the following Tuesday (after the Columbus Day holiday).

During this observation, the human relations frame is most apparent in the overall relaxed atmosphere at the school. Students are out of school for the day and this day is about teachers learning to be more effective in their jobs. As adults, the teachers are offered choices as to how they will spend their hours. The PTA luncheon provides an opportunity for networking with

parents and other teachers. In a school of this size, it is not uncommon for some teachers to be familiar with only the teachers in their grade level.

Symbolizing the light of knowledge, sparkling strands of low level lighting deck the entryway and main office. Live plants, freshly painted murals and tasteful decorations create an inviting atmosphere, giving the sense of a building where community pride is valued. Colorful displays of student work encourage respect for others' efforts and recognize student achievement. Political influences include preparation for the NCA visit, orientation for use of the military gas card, and required online ethics training. The school improvement day is structured with an agenda offering multiple workshops, as well as a review of the school's mission statement and goals. There is evidence that human relations, symbolism, politics, and structure all had an influence on making this professional development day successful, due in part to the successful principal's leadership and planning.

Middle School Principal, Observation 1

As is typical at military installations overseas, in order to enter the compound where the school is located, one must show proper identification to security personnel. The school is surrounded by security fencing and a buzzer system/closed circuit TV is used for access. A 10 kilometer speed limit (6 miles per hour) is strictly enforced in the school parking lot, providing for student safety. Although the school's concrete jungle architecture lacks warmth, the addition of potted plants, a "You are Valued Here" sign, and a mural depicting diversity in children have all improved the appearance. In

order to enter the building, visitors must ring a buzzer. Once office staff members recognize or note the appearance of the visitor, personnel activate a buzzer to open the door. Visitors are then directed to proceed to the principal's office, where they sign a log book and get a dated visitor's pass. Throughout the school, there are many colorful posters and bulletin boards with character education themes. In the main office, visitors see photographs depicting the chain of command for the school system. The school is a two-story structure, designed in wings based on stairwells. A separate building annex housing science, family and consumer science, drama, art, and other classrooms is connected to the main building with a covered walkway. The library is located on the second floor.

The middle school faculty meeting was held on October 1, 2008. The principal, dressed in a business suit and a ruffled blouse, took command of the group as they entered, asking them to not sit at the computers in the school library, but rather at the tables. The school population dropped this year, necessitating the elimination of the assistant principal slot and changing the leadership structure of the school. The principal greeted the faculty from her position in the middle of the room and told them it was her intent to use the faculty meetings for staff development and curriculum engagement. The agendas, printed on cheerful yellow paper, were distributed to faculty members. Included on this sheet were attendance codes for the school information system.

The principal gave a sneak preview of what to expect at the November faculty meeting: a presentation on “Living in the New Normal,” which concerns the effect of deployment and transitions on children who parents are in the military. Currently, one-third of families in the community have a parent who is deployed, making that number greater than 100. She emphasized the importance of being compassionate and nice, especially given the stress level of the parents and students. The principal reported having comforted parents herself as they broke down in her office. Parents related that the school was a safe haven for them. Staff members were asked to keep in touch with parents whose spouses were deployed. The school is planned a salute wall for those deployed. Parents were invited to attend the professional development day planned for October 10, 2008.

The principal introduced new teachers to the rest of the faculty and proudly announced that the school was now fully staffed. Previously, there were several long-term substitutes filling positions, but with command support personnel was able to process full time employees. Next, the principal asked about other celebrations to be announced. Updates were given on family members in the hospital and a home purchase closing, lending evidence that the staff view one another as more than just colleagues, but supportive friends. This environment is obviously supported by the principal, whose school is filled with posters concerning good character traits. She exhibits much enthusiasm as she leads the faculty meeting.

Staff members were reminded to exercise confidentiality procedures, both inside and outside the school, especially when dealing with special education issues/students. Conversations in public may be overheard and/or misunderstood by community members. The principal asked that teachers monitor the hallways; she suggested teachers in one hallway alternate going out between classes and at lunch so that it is monitored throughout the day. Smiling, she reminded teachers to sign out in the office when leaving the building during the day to ensure safety and accountability. Gesturing, the principal announced that a new cleaning contract has been awarded and asks if there are currently any cleaning issues. She reminded teachers that there should not be any interruptions during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time (this is a school improvement intervention for reading comprehension) and pledged to remind office staff of this commitment.

The next portion of the faculty meeting was a discussion of upcoming events, including Open House for parents, which the principal referred to as fries, shake, and apple pie (because of the brief contact). Continuing the analogy, the principal announced that the school Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) would be providing a spaghetti dinner on October 22, 2008, in an effort to provide a more relaxed, extended time for parents, teachers, and administration to talk, explain procedures, and entertain questions on the block schedule. Another coming attraction is the dance/rap character education presentation “HYPE.” This would reinforce the recurring character education theme throughout the school. The principal announced

that PTSA would continue a burgers and basketball program this year. Red Ribbon Week to encourage a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle will be supported in October 2008. Some of the activities planned for this campaign will be a Fun Run with other area schools, an assembly, a basketball game, and a door decorating contest. The principal has a good working knowledge of middle schoolers and strives to provide them a safe, fun environment in which to learn.

Concerning technology, the school website supports the possibility for teachers to post their homework. This allows parents/students to check homework assignments daily. Teachers are to send in their assignments by twelve o'clock daily and they are posted by 3:10. Some teachers choose to use blogs that are linked to the school website. There are links to teacher pages, but some restrictions apply due to system-wide security measures.

Throughout the staff meeting, several people participated in explaining various programs. Pauses were made to allow discussion, questions, and comments from the faculty. Following this portion of the meeting, the faculty split into departments to conduct relevant departmental business, thus eliminating the need for an additional meeting day. This also allowed for a distribution of leadership, as the departmental chairs led the small group meetings. The meeting concluded at 4:15 P.M.

I observed the middle school principal use all four of Bolman and Deal's frameworks for leadership while conducting the faculty meeting. In the human relations frame, the meeting featured a celebration sharing time,

during which one teacher announced the purchase of a home and another announced the recovery of her sick husband. Teachers were reminded to be sensitive to the needs of the students as many were affected by deployments and reintegration. Parents were invited to attend the upcoming professional development day, as well as open house and parent conferences. A new faculty member was warmly welcomed. Teachers were advised to adhere to confidentiality when discussing student issues. Symbolism also played a role in the meeting. The principal stood front and center in the room, leaving no doubt about who was in charge of the meeting. A planned “salute wall” would be a symbol of respect for all who have a loved one in harm’s way. Colorful posters throughout the hallways and an upcoming “HYPE” assembly both support character education. The term “Open House” symbolizes the school opening itself to the community in a gesture of welcome. The promotion of Red Ribbon Week symbolizes a commitment to a drug and alcohol free lifestyle. Several structures were evident in this meeting, including the principal’s statement that the purpose of faculty meetings would be for staff development and curriculum engagement. Just as it is important for a teacher to provide to his/her students the objective of a lesson, it is also important for the principal to set the objectives of a meeting. A printed agenda provided the structure for the meeting. In order to maintain good discipline in the school, the principal asked all teachers to help monitor hallways between classes. As an intervention to increase student reading scores, a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) program has been implemented. Teachers were reminded that

in order to make this structure work, there should not be interruptions. A technological structure in place to assist students as well as parents is the homework link on the school website. Here, parents and students can check to see what homework has been assigned and when it is due. This is a structure designed to promote student success. All of the four Bolman and Deal frameworks worked in synergy at this faculty meeting to allow flow of communication to and from the principal.

Middle School Principal, Observation 2

As I arrived at the school, I could hear the morning announcements read by student leaders. These included the school menu, which is based on United States Department of Agriculture Guidelines, upcoming student events, and a thought for the day. Finally, in accordance with system directives, the pledge of allegiance was recited. I passed through the multi-purpose room just in time to see a parent volunteer setting up snacks for the morning nutrition break, where students may purchase nutritious foods from a cart. The schedule for the day featured three awards assemblies, organized by grade levels and held to honor a variety of student achievements. The printed program for the awards assembly featured the vision of the principal, "[Name Omitted] Middle School. . .Where Everyone is Valued" and mirrored the school colors. Awards assemblies are held every quarter and take place in the multi-purpose room, which also serves as the school cafeteria. The stage, draped in heavy velvet black curtains, is set with musical equipment, a public address system, and burgundy leather chairs—offering an air of

dignity—for the speakers. A Dr. Seuss poster at the perimeter serves as a reminder of the upcoming Read across America Day. The hall is lined with the flags of all 50 United States and prominently displays the American flag, a reminder of patriotism and home for those who are attending school far from their native land. Parents gathered and were seated at the front seats to witness their children receive awards.

The assembly began with the principal welcoming parents and students to the celebration of excellence. Dressed in a colorful M&M's™ jacket and matching hot pink tennis shoes, the principal had obviously given thought to her kid-friendly attire. Her trendy hairstyle and multiply pierced ears lent an impression that she is someone with whom students would feel comfortable talking. All stood while the pledge of allegiance was once again recited and an ensemble of middle school musicians played the national anthem. In her opening remarks, the principal proposed to students that this was a time for self-reflection—a time to think about what they were doing well and a time to think about how they could improve themselves. Next, she reviewed the behavioral norms for the assembly, asking the audience to practice courtesy and hold their applause until an entire group was recognized for their accomplishments. The principal then took the opportunity to introduce a new item that would be included in the morning announcements beginning next week. She modeled a "Do you know?" question that would be used to prepare students for *TerraNova*, the system-wide assessment, by asking students if they knew the mathematical order of

operations. She started them off with “parenthesis” and was pleased to hear that many of the students could respond with exponents, multiple/divide left to right, add, and then subtract. She suggested that they use the mnemonic “Please excuse my dear aunt [Sally].” To incorporate humor, she suggested that instead of using the name Sally they could replace it with her own name that begins with “S.”

The school guidance counselor was introduced and gave an inspirational speech that provided students with a challenge, citing Barack Obama’s vision of hope and change as the theme for her talk. She shared her experience of having been present at President Barack Obama’s inauguration one month before. She explained that these students who were overseas because many of their parents served in the military had much in common with the 44th President. President Obama was an unlikely candidate for President, but he beat the odds. Like many of the students who are part of single-parent families (even if this is a temporary situation due to deployment), Barack Obama grew up in a single-parent household and then later lived with his grandparents. He valued education and once lived in a country other than the United States, attending many different schools. The counselor suggested that Barack Obama used his life experiences to achieve and these students could also do so. The speech included a moving quote from President Barack Obama's letter to his daughters:

> I want all our children to go to schools worthy of their potential—schools that challenge them, inspire them, and instill in them a

> sense of wonder about the world around them. I want them to have the chance to go to college—even if their parents aren't rich. And I want them to get good jobs: jobs that pay well and give them benefits like health care. Jobs that let them spend time with their own kids and retire with dignity. I want to push the boundaries of discovery so that you'll live to see new technologies and inventions that improve our lives and make our planet cleaner and safer. And I want us to push our own human boundaries to reach beyond the divides of race and region, gender and religion that keep us from seeing the best in each other. (Obama, 2009, p. 1)

The counselor assured the students that this school had the greatest hopes for each of them and ended with some fun facts about Barrack Obama, the 44th President of the United States. At the conclusion of her speech, the audience applauded as the ensemble took its place to offer several jazz selections. The principal modeled appropriate audience appreciation of the music, nodding and swaying slightly to the music, as well as occasionally tapping her foot on the floor. After the musical performance, it was time for recognizing the middle school students for their many accomplishments.

Awards were presented in a wide variety of categories, including academic awards for overall grade point average; encore subject area awards such as family and consumer science, art, physical education, world languages, drama, and music; and Star Awards for citizenship, scholarship,

leadership, and responsibility. As students' names were called, they proceeded to the stage, were handed a certificate by the principal, shook hands, and then were received "Mustang bucks" from the counselor. These "Mustang bucks" are coupons that students may use to purchase items at a special school store that is set up twice yearly. As a final appreciation for their hard work, the students assembled in front of the stage for a commemorative photo. The groups represented a rich variety of middle school students, diverse in height, weight, race, and gender; they sported braces, braids, glasses, and even a white cane. The drama teacher concluded the encore portion of the awards by reminding students that "You do not have to be great to get started, but you do have to get started to be great."

In her closing remarks, the principal reminded students that the school was their work site. She reminded them to boost themselves up and strive for excellence. The principal also announced the implementation of the Zeroes Aren't Permitted (ZAP) program at the school, to begin third quarter. The program will provide for individual accountability. Students who do not do their homework when it is assigned will have the opportunity to succeed by completing the work during seminar, after school, or if necessary during Saturday school. The principal asked the students to "help me help you help yourselves." The awards assembly was a reflection of the principal's vision for the school. Co-planned with the principals and team leaders/teachers, the assembly awarded excellence and was inclusive of the diverse population of the school. It showed that the school was a place "where everyone is valued"

and that the teachers and principal were there “to help students succeed—no matter what it takes” (middle school principal, 2009).

High School Principal, Observation 1

In order to enter the compound where the school is located, visitors must show proper identification. The school is surrounded by security fencing and a buzzer system/closed circuit TV is used for access. To soften the outside appearance of the school, a mat with the school mascot welcomes visitors. Pots of chrysanthemums in the school colors frame the entry door. The school has recently been painted a gray/purple color, again reflecting the school colors. A four feet high mascot guards the front of the school. In the foyer, an easel displays a motivational thought for the week and the school hallways are tiled and clean. A display case features letter jackets, mascots, and trophies. In the main hallway, visitors see photographs depicting the chain of command for the school system.

The principal greeted me and escorted me to the library, where the monthly faculty meeting would be held. On the way to the library, she encountered a parent and assured him that his concern would be addressed. Outside, students waved from the school bus as it pulled away. Several children from the local Child Development Center passed the principal on the sidewalk and asked for a hug. During the walk over, the principal told me that she does her best to keep the monthly faculty meetings to less than one hour at the request of the teachers’ union, but this is not always possible. To attain this goal, faculty members are required to submit agenda items in advance,

which focuses the entire faculty on “big ticket items.” Also, the principal does not repeat items if faculty members come in late; this encourages them to be on time. I asked the principal what she does for the teachers who are absent the day of the faculty meeting. She said there is a two-pronged approach. Any handouts and minutes of the meeting are placed in the teachers’ boxes, and they are instructed to see the principal if there are further questions.

The faculty meeting is held in the school library. The round and rectangular tables are filled with special interest book displays and computers. Although some teachers do sit at the tables with computers, they do not use them during the faculty meeting. Newly installed vertical blinds help with light and temperature control. The furniture is in good condition in this long, narrow room. The principal, dressed in a professional gray and black suit, welcomes the staff and distributes extra copies of the agenda, which has been sent out electronically earlier in the week. The agenda is carefully followed as described in the following paragraph.

The very first item is an update on a faculty member who has been hospitalized for cancer treatments. The staff has made a quilt depicting outlines of all of their hands; they are asked to quietly make their way over during/after the meeting to sign the quilt. Next, the counselor describes procedures for the upcoming PSAT. The video production teacher shares the “Bison Challenge,” an innovative way of using the talents of the video production classes and the Closed Circuit Television (CCT) system in the school to publicize school events and educate students on pertinent issues.

The School Improvement Chairperson hands out committee assignments and gives an overview of the agenda for the October 10, 2008 professional development day. The Student Council sponsors hand out a packet that illustrates a variety of activities that have been planned for homecoming. Two faculty volunteers provide the opportunity for staff members to give to charity through the Combined Federal Campaign—Overseas. The principal announces changes in the cleaning contract for the next five years. Next there is a discussion of a program called “Beyond the Bison Years.” This program provides information to parents and students on living independently and preparing for college and careers. Example topics include moving, insurance, renting your first apartment, using credit cards responsibly, and succeeding in a job interview. To further prepare students for life after high school, the school is hosting a college night. The principal appealed to faculty members to attend and support the event. Just for fun, students will be allowed to wear college hats and sweatshirts on this day.

In a balance of leadership, the focus is turned to the school’s public affairs representative, who talks about the Bison Beat, which are radio and TV spots made for the school CCT system as well as Armed Forces Network (AFN). The school has also submitted positive publicity this school year in the base newspaper and the Stars and Stripes newspaper. As a reminder of the importance of connecting with the community, a reintegration (when soldiers return from deployment in the Middle East) is up-coming. It is important to be aware of the effect on families when reintegration occurs. This is not always

the happy event one would imagine. It often sets in motion a power shift in the family and an emotional readjustment that strongly affects students.

Other “nuts and bolts” announcements included a reminder for teachers to schedule an appointment with their supervisors in order to review Professional Growth Plans (PGPs). Suspense dates for No Fear and EEO training were announced, as required of federal employees. The principal thanked teachers for their visibility in the hallways and reminded them to take attendance every period so that the school has an accurate record. For safety, the school will be having practice lock-downs, shelter in place, and drug dog visits. Due to military moves, many of the parents and their children will be leaving the community during this school year. However, contrary to the rumor mills, there is no closing date for the school at this time. Faculty members and administrators received recognition for ten, 20, and 30 years of service to the United States Government. Finally, a teacher made an announcement about the American Legion speeches on the Constitution Contest. At the conclusion of the faculty meeting, the principal gave the floor to the union representative and left the library.

Applying Bolman and Deal’s four frameworks to the observation of the successful high school principal, I found evidence of all four categories: human relations frame, symbolic frame, political frame, and structural frame. Following is a description of each framework and examples of how each was employed. The human resource frame was evident in the interactions among faculty, staff, and the principal, which indicated a collegial relationship. The

faculty meeting's first agenda item was that of concern for a faculty member's health. Time was allocated to spotlight the Combined Federal Campaign-Overseas, a program that gives civilians the opportunity to participate in donations to charities. During the discussion of homecoming plans, it was clear that the festivities were planned in order to include all students. Throughout the meeting, speakers were politely thanked for their contributions to the school. This included the counselor's efforts in developing a testing schedule, the video production teacher's innovative project, and the student council sponsor's organization of the homecoming activities. All teachers were commended for their efforts in making the GradeSpeed™ program a viable tool for communicating student progress to parents.

The principal made strong use of the symbolic frame through displays of the bison throughout the school; the bison is a symbol of student pride in their school and community. The "Bison Challenge" issues the challenge to all to promote personal and school pride. Homecoming king and queen elections recognize student leadership, while spirit activities throughout homecoming week are symbolic in promoting student involvement in the school. The school colors of purple and gold indicate royalty. The traditional homecoming parade and bonfire inspire school spirit and involve the entire community. The quilt made by faculty members was a symbol of love for a seriously ill colleague.

Serving the families of many military personnel, the school has definite political influences. The school has a strong Junior Reserve Officer Training

Corp (JROTC) program, whose leaders led the homecoming parade. Democratic elections were held to elect the homecoming court. During homecoming week, a military organization volunteered to provide a free lunch for all of the students. The time for the parade was arranged so that all students could participate. Homecoming festivities also included the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. A promotion of the Combined Federal Campaign—Overseas was announced. The school's maintenance contract was just awarded, based on governmental contract regulations. Teachers were reminded of the stress reintegration brings; reintegration refers to soldiers' readjustment upon returning to their homes and families following tours of duty in the war. Based on recommendations from NCA, each department is represented on the school improvement leadership team; this representation is in keeping with democratic governance. In light of the upcoming presidential elections, a suggestion was offered to use the school's closed circuit television system (provided by the military) to air a game show format of a debate. At the conclusion of the official faculty meeting, staff members were invited to stay for the union meeting, a reminder of this influence on the politics of the school.

It was evident that many structures were in place to make this faculty meeting efficient and effective. Draft agendas were sent out the preceding week along with an invitation to add agenda items. In order to stay on task, no open forum items were entertained. The date of the meeting is consistently the first Monday of the month. Structure for the PSAT testing schedule was

set and announced so that all faculty members could plan accordingly. An agenda for the upcoming professional development day was announced and logistics explained. Procedures for the use of GradeSpeed™ to communicate student progress with parents were outlined. The principal distributed minutes of the faculty meeting to any staff members who are not able to attend. All of these structures contribute to a well-run school.

High School Principal, Observation 2

After signing in at the front desk, I was ushered to the principal's office where I met two ninth/tenth grade teachers of honors English and honors History. The tone for this meeting was influenced by the setting. The principal's office includes comfortable seating on a leather upholstered sofa and chairs. An antique clock, bench, and floral carpet add a touch of home, while the American flag waves over all proceedings. Colorful art designed by students frames the sofa and a strong bronze bison stands at attention on the principal's desk. The objective for this meeting was to collaboratively brainstorm and determine how the teachers could better incorporate more writing (one of the school's improvement goals) into their curriculum. The principal had reviewed the standardized test score data and noticed a weakness in writing scores among the honors students in grades nine and ten. Honors classes are composed of the top 20% of students and expectations of existing strong writing skills are not always a reality. The principal suggested that an increase in the amount of time spent on teaching the writing process might influence the outcomes. One of the teachers

commented on the lack of training for teachers in the honors program, but they agreed that training was only a first step. The next important step was collaboration between the history and language arts honors teachers, something that is not always possible since teacher preparation periods do not always align to allow this structure. They also discussed the system's requirements for the honors program, which include assignment of a common grade and collaborative projects for the two courses. The teachers indicated that while they liked the structure of the honors curriculum, they still found the need to supplement materials. The English teacher raised the desire for parents to be partners in education, encouraging children to read classic books at home. While not all honors students proceed to Advanced Placement (AP) classes the following year, many do. AP students will be given "strive for five" t-shirts this year to symbolize their desire to score a five on the AP exams.

The principal gently led the group back to the objective of the meeting. Returning to the school improvement goal interventions, the teachers settled on using graphic organizers to inspire better writing among their students. The teachers agreed to make a presentation during a professional development meeting, sharing with their colleagues the usefulness and applicability of graphic organizers. This strategy will be presented as one of several options for teachers who are seeking interventions for better writing at the high school.

After a brief confidential meeting with the assistant superintendent and a quick trip to consult with the guidance counselor, the principal was off and running to observe the band class. She was enthusiastic about having a band at the school since this was a recent development after many years of having only choral music. The principal sat at the back of the classroom, unobtrusively taking notes and scripting for the teacher's observation. Teachers' classrooms are normally visited informally three times a year. During the third year of an appraisal cycle, the principal makes one formal observation that is longer in length. During the class, maintenance workers come in and begin work on a project that has been suggested by the teacher; they add a flashing light that will blink when there are special announcements or an emergency alarm. These might not otherwise be heard above the cacophony of sound produced by the band. It is obvious that the principal is open to suggestions that improve the school. The band period ended and we observed the beginning of a guitar class, sneaking away quietly in order to address the next item on the principal's agenda—the Student Success Team.

The Student Success Team (SST) meets weekly for confidential discussion of at-risk students at the high school. Included in these discussions are the principal, counselors, Adolescent Substance Abuse Counseling Services (ASACS), school nurse, and normally the school psychologist, who was out sick on the day the principal was observed. The team, using first names only, addressed student concerns ranging from depression, seniors not likely to graduate, ADHD, home issues,

illness/hospitalization, low academic performance, special education referrals, behavioral problems, pregnancy, relationship issues, family issues, drugs and alcohol use, the effects of reintegration, and emotional impairment (IE). A comprehensive checklist including such interventions as lab/support classes, seminar placement, seminar utilization, parent-teacher contact/conferences, Tuesday-Thursday Scholars, use of agenda book, special education referral, school psychologist referral, ASACS referral, Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Services (CAPS) referral, Teen Clinic referral, community family counseling, and family life counseling are among the many resources at the team's disposal as they attempt to match the student's need to an appropriate resource. In this meeting, a caring staff led by a successful principal appears committed to making the district's mission their reality: "Promoting Student Success—Preventing Student Failure."

Themes

After collecting artifacts from the schools of three successful principals; conducting and transcribing interviews with the three principals and the superintendent; and making two observations of the principals in leadership roles at the schools, I was overwhelmed with data. To make sense of this data, I organized individual school principal folders for the artifacts. Then I identified key words in the transcripts of the interviews and placed these key concepts in a spread sheet. This spreadsheet was eventually converted to multiple spreadsheets (Appendices G-K) based on Bolman and Deal's

Reframing theories to make it more manageable. Field notes from the observations, organized according to Bolman and Deal's frames of Human Relations, Structure, Symbolism, and Political, were coded for key phrases or words and then transferred to spreadsheets (Appendices L-O). Taking the advice of Stake (2006), I first carefully examined each set of data from individual schools before I began to look for themes across all three schools. Some themes emerged right away as evidenced in interviews and observations; others were confirmed when the artifacts review was made. Naturally, one would expect the commonality of a school system to influence leadership in some aspects. Conversely, one would also expect principals' personal experiences and styles to contribute to diverse leadership practices.

Six major themes emerged from the study seeking to find the answer to the research question of "How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools serving a large number of children of military parents?" These themes included relationships, partnerships, learning environment, vision, data, and politics. While the themes of relationships and partnerships share commonality, they are differentiated. Relationships are, for the purposes of this study, those that occur within the schools. For example, I refer to the relationships between principal and teacher, teacher and teacher, teachers and students, and principal and students. Partnerships, by contrast, still involve relationships, but are formed outside the walls of the school. These would include partnerships with parents, the host nation community, the military community, and other support services such as universities.

Relationships

The first and most obvious theme that resulted from a study of all data sources is that relationships are important to effective leadership in school improvement. While all three principals have their own unique styles, all emit positive and encouraging spirits. The high school principal confided,

> I try to work with them [teachers] on an intimate level. I try to get to know the person that I work with and find some kind of connection so that they know that I'm interested in them professionally, and that I also have a personal interest in them being successful.

The principals spoke of support for their teachers. For example, the elementary principal said that when he had difficulties with teachers, he might use the phrase, "I understand that there are some concerns that are cropping up. What can I do to help you? How can we work on this together?" The principals constantly seek interventions for at-risk students, recognize emotions, show compassion for others, are unthreatening, lead by example, acknowledge success, exercise patience, and present an approachable and responsive demeanor. The middle school principal said in her interview, "I try to put myself in their [teachers/students] shoes, which gives me a broader picture as to how I need to deal with them. She added, "I try to treat people fairly and I'm a good listener." The principals also celebrate diversity, share decision making, and show appreciation for their staffs. The evidence of this

theme—as perhaps the strongest—is found in interviews, observations, and artifacts (school improvement plans, agendas, minutes) alike. Principals participating in this study lead their schools in accordance with the guiding principles of the organization, which include “trust and respect for others” (system website).

Partnerships

The encouraging spirit of the principals is not limited to interactions with students and teachers, but also in forming partnerships with parents and the military community. All three schools have mechanisms in place to include parents in support of the schools as well as decision making. At the elementary school the principal conveyed,

> The partnership with the military and the community at large with regard to tutoring has been absolutely phenomenal. Volunteers are coming out of the woodwork in order to support our reading program. . . We have a full complement of volunteers at all grade levels now. There’s a difference between a volunteer and a visitor.

The schools host Parent-Teacher groups, community volunteers, and School Advisory Committees. The middle school principal reported,

> We have a great partnership going with CYS (Child and Youth Services). We connect with them on their Homework Club. Other military units come in and help chaperone dances. They

> also mentor kids. Some even come in and help with supervision during lunch, which is fantastic.

The military communities' School Liaison Officers work with the principals to ensure a cohesive relationship with the military command; this was brought to light in the interviews. The high school principal explained,

> I frankly could not accomplish the things I do at school if I didn't have the parents and the community support. They're the reason we have college night. They are the reason we have wonderful support at all of our games: basketball, football, and wrestling. They are the reason we have such a great graduation.

The military Youth and School Services organizations work with the schools in supplying after school programs to supplement the academics of the school day. This theme is associated with Bolman and Deal's human resource frame, but it also crosses borders with the political frame.

Learning Environment

In order to promote pride in the school and a pleasant, safe, welcoming learning environment, all three successful principals have acknowledged the importance of the physical appearance of the school, as well as security measures; they have spent considerable energies to promote facilities maintenance and management. During her interview, the high school principal commented,

> When you walk in, if you see it's clean and neat and welcoming and then you are greeted in a warm manner by the faculty and the staff, you're going to have a better impression about leaving your kids at our school. . .I've worked on that a lot.

An additional example of the high school's welcoming environment is evident in another regular practice.

> I have kids who come to school hungry, commented the high school principal. I have apples and pretzels in the office; they walk in and get them any time they want—there's no question. It is little things like that focus that get the kids set up so they can do well.

In addressing the atmosphere of the school, the elementary school principal elaborated,

> We have music at open activities. We make it louder and then bring it down to capture the audience's attention. We do lots of stuff with lights to highlight artwork and certain areas of the school. We have pictures of the bobcat everywhere so that people know that this is a friendly, happy bobcat. . .to promote the feeling of friendliness for elementary school students. We use colors a lot. . . they really have an impact on the school. In our lobby. . .we have music playing in the background, plants, comfortable chairs, and a rug. In the office lighting is subdued and there's music playing in the background so people feel like

> they’re in a hotel, maybe, or a department store that’s really nice rather than a cold school where there are signs that say “do not enter.”

The middle school principal shared,

> When I was assigned here as an assistant principal in 2000, I was given a sheet of paper with two goals on the paper. One was change the climate of the school and the second goal was to help students be successful. When I cam here in 2006 as principal, I was given [the same two goals]. I think the climate of a school is critical; it is critical. And, for me, [when] people walk in and say, “Whew, it’s a nice environment,” it feels great; that’s perfect for me. And that’s one of my goals as a leader.

In addition to pleasant ambiance, the schools have regular safety inspections, contracted cleaning teams, and preventive maintenance services provided by the district. However, all three of the principals have gone beyond the required appearance and added elements that make the schools aesthetically pleasing. Promoting a school building that inspires pride is a strong theme at all three schools of these successful principals.

Security considerations are taken seriously at these schools serving the military overseas. Doors to the schools are locked and require a buzzer to be answered before entry is granted; closed circuit TV allows personnel to scrutinize all who enter. The schools also have regular fire and lock-down drills to prepare for the unexpected. School windows are coated with Mylar to

add protection. Each office has a sign-in procedure to document visitors' arrivals and departures. This is also in keeping with the guiding principals of the school system, which include a "safe and stable learning environment" (system website).

Vision

All three principals have clear visions of the schools they wish to lead. Each principal's vision is reflective of his/her leadership style and inclusive philosophy. The visions, through diverse, empower the principals as they share them with teachers, principals, parents, and community. They envision schools as pleasant communities where teachers and students learn, supported by parents and the community, constantly moving forward and leaving no one behind. The elementary principal's vision is a school that is

> An open, friendly, music/art-filled, classic education oriented celebratory school where people are celebrated for their contributions and for their ideals and for themselves as people, and where we have high test scores are a function of what we are doing.

The middle school principal sums up her vision succinctly as, "We are on the road success—no matter what it takes." Finally, the high school principal envisions a school where "We have a safe, clean learning environment where we focus on the positive and set high expectations for the faculty and students." The visions of the schools also support the vision of the district "All students in the [name omitted] District will be academically

successful" (district website) and the system vision of "Communities committed to success for ALL students!" (system website).

Data

Decisions at the schools are based on a variety of data and feedback; this is a continuous process that causes schools to thrive (see Figure 1 below). The school improvement plans reflect regular review of school, group, and individual student data. Data are not only derived from standardized testing, but also from classroom interim and formative assessments. The elementary school principal stated,

> Data are indicative of not only student, but also teacher performance. Review of data can cause some discomfort and this discomfort may lead to needed change. We are looking at our data, making changes over time, and including people rather than excluding groups. . . . We talk about data and we look at it. We examine performance so that opportunity is provided, but then the teacher has to come up with their own results. And the question always is, "Well, what do you think it means? What do you think we should do differently?"

The schools use data to determine goals and interventions, as well as to gauge progress toward goals. Other data, such as D/F lists, report cards, and parent satisfaction surveys help guide decision making. Teachers and parents are becoming increasingly savvy data consumers. The middle school

principal emphasized, “This school is performance-driven.” The high school principal reported,

> I meet with my at-risk seniors every week. We examine their grades and I ask them what they are doing to improve. Of course, the first thing that we do at the beginning of every school year before the students get here. . .is review our test scores. We talk about them in depth because when we get the results in, I want them to know: Here we always celebrate our successes. Let’s see what we did in the great areas so that we can move to those areas where we’re challenged. We focus on the positive. At the end of the school year, we do exactly the same thing, but with individual students because in a school this small it only takes a few students to impact your scores.

Political Influence

Finally, there is a strong political influence on the schools and their leaders due to the school’s affiliation with the military. By this, I reference government and system-wide regulations that exercise authority over the schools. Military restructuring and deployment/reintegration have placed a great deal of stress on military families. The school is often the rock of the community, providing a stable foundation in a sea of sand. This has in turn delegated to the school principal and teachers some responsibilities that were once upon a time strictly those of families. The elementary principal noted,

> One of the biggest influences that we're seeing now is the drawdown and the restructuring of the military. Teachers want some stability and they want a constant. They want to know. . . movement of troops and changes in where organizations are located. . .That compromises their ability to be constant.

Another influence is the system's area office weekly directives. While these provide a valuable communication tool, they also convey many time-consuming demands, reports, and deadlines. The middle school principal recognizes this political (and structural) influence in saying,

> The school system politics—pretty much they are our guide. They tell us what to do; it comes straight from the top. We are told what to do and pretty much how to do it. I think we spend a lot of time doing those "issues" of the political realm and we don't spend enough time in the classrooms. Sometimes the politics can help the school. Last year I was short teachers so I had long-term subs for a while—too long—actually. Then a statement was made from an individual in a high powered position that said, "I want [name omitted] Middle School fully staffed, and I don't care what needs to happen to get it done." And if that's not political! As of today, I'm fully staffed.

The middle school principal also commented on the political influence of the teachers' union, saying "The union is the driving force—the bargaining unit for the teachers. . .Luckily, I have a great FRS [Faculty Representative

Spokesperson] and we work closely on everything. She also recognizes that "Our makeup is the military community, which in fact defines part of the culture of the school."

The high school principal explains that,

> The mission is first. We are here because of the military. We will support them. It's not a one-way street. We don't just take, take, take; we want to give back to the community, too. So, the politics is—I think—understanding who you're working with and their mindset.

These three successful principals have found paths that allow them to ethically lead with their individual visions while complying with the rules that are inherent in any school system, plus adding the dimension of working in tandem with the military. Their outstanding efforts do not go unnoticed in their communities or at the district office.

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study that is based on answering the research question is "How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?" Included in this summary of the study was descriptive information concerning the school improvement plans, standardized testing data, and interviews and observations of the three successful principals. Also included was information gleaned from an interview with the district superintendent.

The chapter concluded with an outline of six prominent themes that emerged from the qualitative study. The common themes were relationships, partnerships, learning environment, vision, data, and politics. Direct quotes from the participating successful principals were included to support the themes.

Chapter V: Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter will summarize the findings, make recommendations, and draw conclusions on the study. This qualitative study sought to gather triangulated data to address the research question of "How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?" The findings of the study were organized into the four frameworks developed by Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002): Human Relations, Structural, Symbolic, and Political. Elements of all four frameworks were evident in the interviews and observations. In some instances, a key idea or theme appeared in more than one frame. For example, while working in the military environment is an influence on the structure of the schools, it is also a political influence. Also, some of the structures that are in place in the schools, such as teams in the middle school, influences the human relations frame.

Summary of Findings

While all three principals participating in the study had unique leadership styles and approaches to leading school improvement, all were successful in their efforts. The principals have all had successful NCA accreditation visits in the last three years. They have also succeeded in holding teachers and students to high expectations and building a sense of community. For the most part, the principals do not have the opportunity to hire the faculty members. Instead, the faculty is established at the school

when the principal arrives. Additions to the faculty may occur through the transfer program, over which the principal has little control, other than to configure teaching combinations. If there are open slots on the faculty, qualified teachers may be hired locally, if available. In cases where no transferring employees or local hires are available, the principals may request that a teaching position be filled from stateside applicants. It is a challenge, then, to mold a diverse faculty into a collaborative unit of colleagues. The principals engage the faculty in professional growth through Professional Growth Plans (PGPs), meaningful professional development days, and leadership opportunities. In all three schools, professional development days are planned towards building learning communities. Teachers are often offered choices during the day, in effect differentiating the instruction based on the needs of the teachers as students. The three principals all carefully craft their approaches to leading change, understanding that there will be resistance and countering with savvy strategies borne of experience and intelligence. Study participants share leadership with teachers and—where appropriate—parents, increasing collaboration and buy-in for the school improvement process. The successful principals show respect for the military and recognize the pressures of military family life.

Comparing the emerging themes to the Bolman and Deal framework model for leadership, it is apparent that some of the themes match the model very closely, while others show a blurring of lines or appear to lie outside the model's borders. For example, the theme of relationships fits squarely into the

human resource frame, but that same theme of relationships leads us to the theme of partnerships. Partnerships are formed within the human resource frame, but politics (another of Bolman and Deal's frames) influences the relationships and partnerships. The learning environment theme is evident in the structural frame of Bolman and Deal. It is, however, also influenced by the political frame, given the increased safety considerations associated with the military environment. Because the atmosphere affects human behavior, it is also connected to the human resource frame. The symbols evoking pride in the schools present a connection to the symbolic frame as well. Although a principal's vision is part of the structure of a leader's philosophy, it does not cleanly fit into any particular one of Bolman and Deal's framework. It originates in the human resource frame as a personal philosophy, but influences many of the structures in a school as it evolves into standard operating procedures. Collection and review of data are part of the structural system of the school, so use of data would fit the structural framework of Bolman and Deal's model. The political theme is synonymous with the Bolman and Deal frame and illustrates one of the closest parallels to their model. In conclusion, the Bolman and Deal framework was very helpful in collecting and analyzing the data, but I had to be open-minded enough not to force connections or ignore data simply to align with the framework. In other words, the model was a helpful tool, but there were some innovative tools not in the original tool box.

In the introductory chapter of this paper, I mentioned that the schools studied here are accredited by North Central Association Commission for Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA-CASI). NCA-CASI is the accrediting agency and is part of a parent organization of AdvancED. I would be remiss if I failed to mention that during my observations and interviews, I saw a great deal of evidence that the schools were committed to the seven standards of the accrediting agency. AdvancEd Standards for Quality Schools include setting vision and purpose, providing governance and leadership, improving teaching and learning, documenting and using results, allocating resources and support systems, building stakeholder communication and relationships, and making a commitment to continuous improvement (AdvancEd website, 2006). I do not believe it is coincidental that the identified themes all fall within these standards. The military is fond of the expression "what gets checked gets done."

Summary of Themes

As identified in Chapter 4, several themes emerged from this study, including relationships, partnerships, learning environment, vision, data, and political influence. The following section examines each of these themes individually, reflecting on literature in the individual areas identified.

Relationships

"The school leader holds the key to creating a caring community in which learning flourishes" (Rooney, 2003, p. 76). A study by Robinson (2008)

compared transformational and instructional leadership, finding that leaders who focused on their relationships in the workplace as well as the foundation processes of teaching and learning had greater influence on student outcomes. During my visits to the three schools participating in this study, I saw an overwhelming amount of evidence that these three principals have established caring environments, nourishing relationships with teachers, staff, parents, and students. The principals participating in study model this caring by remembering names, maintaining an open office door, communicating regularly in positive ways, rewarding success, and making personal connections with others. They have not lost sight of the fact that all are human beings with needs, moods, strengths, and weaknesses. In order to provide idealized influence, principals must always serve as role models (Leithwood, 1994) and to be authentic leaders, they must prove themselves trustworthy by showing integrity (Evans, 1996).

These successful principals fearlessly tackle complicated situations and make difficult decisions, doing their best to shield their students and staffs from forces that would negatively impact these sacred places of learning. Evans (1996) terms this talent “savvy” and Barth (2001) names it “craft knowledge.” Leaders’ emotions are contagious, so it is crucial that they model the nurturing relationships they wish others to emulate. Both Barth (2001) and Sergiovanni (2001) promote the idea of schools as learning communities. The effectiveness of a successful principal is not based on the power of his/her position, but rather on the synergy resulting from positive

relationships with students, parents, teachers, and staff (Rooney, 2003). The twenty-first century school is not simply a building with books and computers and teachers; it is a learning community that evolves through dialogue with stakeholders. This dialogue with stakeholders that begins within the school must then continue outside the walls of the school.

Leadership literature also speaks to the importance of relationships in an organization. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2005) recognize that there is no one set of effective leadership practices that will lead to success. Reeves (2004, 2006) discussed staff motivation as a pertinent factor in school improvement. Motivation is a product of positive relationships within a school. There is evidence that the three principals in the study use Bass and Avolio's (1994) constructive transactional methods, which include setting goals, clarifying outcomes, exchanging rewards, suggesting and consulting, and providing feedback and praise. The principals further promote effective professional relationships by assessing the needs of the staffs, eliminating barriers to change, providing structures for change, creating a culture of open communication, and leading with integrity and trust (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). The principals are also transformational leadership in that they provide individual consideration of their staff members, engage staff members in intellectual stimulation, inspire motivation, and provide idealized influence (Bass, 1985).

Partnerships

School/Home/Community partnerships have been at the forefront for the schools within this system for decades. In the past ten years, however, I have seen the evidence of enormous growth in the support these schools get from their communities. Perhaps it is because of reaction to an explosion of research on the benefits of school/home/community partnerships (Ballen & Moles, 1994; Comer & Haynes, 1992; Davies, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Dauber, 1993; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Or perhaps this can in part be attributed to military deployments and the effects of war; the school is often the stalwart foundation for the community. Evidence from research (Epstein, 1995) shows a connection between families being involved in schools and student achievement, attitude, and attendance. In order for families to be involved in schools, however, there must be a welcoming climate—one that emits an atmosphere of trust and respect. This positive partnership climate not only helps students succeed in school, it helps them succeed in life. As the relationship between school and family improves, so does the parents' perception of the school; this produces a win-win situation. Open communication through a variety of means creates a culture of openness (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Effective use of public relations strategies has played an important role in establishing relationships outside the school. In the fall of 2008, each school in the district designated a public relations contact person. This person was trained and delegated the responsible of promoting appropriate, positive public relations for the schools.

In the three schools whose principals were interviewed and observed for this study, there was much evidence that school/home/community partnership was a priority. This included the physical appearance of the facility, signs welcoming parents at entry doors, the establishment of parent rooms, an active parent-teacher association and/or booster club, regularly scheduled parent conferences, frequent electronic communications with parents, availability for individual teacher/parent or principal/parent conferences, an informative school website, and a school advisory council that included parents.

Several sources in the leadership literature support partnerships. Reeves (2004, 2006) recognizes the importance of public communication, which is the cornerstone of building partnerships with those outside the school. Sosik and Dionne (1997) also emphasize the need for this communication. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000) recommend that parents and community become participants in making school decisions where appropriate. Ouchi's (1981) Theory Z also supports shared decision making. Through School Advisory Council, Parent Teacher Organizations, and parent volunteer programs, the schools in this study encourage parent partnerships. Waldman (1993), who extended the work of Deming (1986), stressed the need for teamwork. This teamwork is not limited to the walls of the schools. School partnerships focus on teamwork that leads to support for student success.

Learning Environment

The school learning environment incorporates a wide variety of factors, including safety, an aesthetically pleasing setting, and an emotional/social sense of belonging. Only a few items in the school improvement literature of Chapter 2 address learning environment directly. Newmann, et al. (2001) suggests that learning climate is one of the elements for curricular coherence in a school. They state that the framework of improvement is supported by good working conditions for the staff. DuFour and Eaker (1998) advise the principal to shape the school culture in order to support both the professional learning community and student learning. While not included in chapter two's review of school improvement and leadership literature, the works of Braham (2004); Buckley, Schneider, and Shan (2005); Dragan (2008); Koth, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2008); Plank, Bradshaw, and Young (2008); and Preble and Taylor (2008) all address the need for the schools to be safe places for both students and teachers in order to promote achievement, good attendance, and a sense of well-being. Lubienski, Lubienski, and Crane (2008) investigated, among other factors, the role of school culture in student achievement. The three successful principals who participated in this study recognized the importance of environment—both physical and social/emotional—in promoting student success. By grooming the schools, the principals created welcoming environments that instilled student and teacher pride and inspired parental and community confidence.

Looking back at the trait theories mentioned in Chapter 2, I am reminded of Thornton's (2006) five attributes of great leaders: "integrity, courage, focus, perseverance, and ability to change" (p. 9). Thornton clearly believes that if a leader's followers do not trust him/her, nothing else he/she does will really matter. Evans (1996) also identifies trust as the beginning of transformation of an organization. This trust building is a key factor in the success of the three principals who participated in this study. The fact that these successful principals also display courage as they focus and persevere with continuous change is the formula that makes them leaders, not simply managers. It is also this formula that has shaped the learning environment of their schools.

Reviewing the leadership literature, we find several instances of support for this theme. Lambert (2003) discusses the importance of an adult learning environment that provides growth opportunities. Elmore (2000, 2004) advises that instructional leadership and curriculum knowledge is not enough for a leader to be successful, but by distributing leadership an organization has increased probability to prosper. Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002) suggest that caring work environments that meet the needs of humans contribute to organizational success.

Vision

The National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), now a part of AdvancED, identifies creating a vision as the first step in the school improvement process (2005). Fullan (2001) quotes a superintendent in Susan Moore Johnson's study (1996) who said, "Ten years ago if I'd had a vision they would have locked me up and now I can't get a job without one" (p. 115). In order for a vision to be genuine and effective, Fullan suggests that it must emerge from experience, be shared at all organizational levels, and generate commitment. It is apparent that the visions of the three successful principals in this study promote visions that are borne of experience. The visions, as suggested by Senge (1990) have been honed by lifelong learning. DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2006) propose that a strong vision, along with a clear mission, collective inquiry, professional learning communities, and action will lead to results in school improvement.

In addition to the school improvement literature, leadership literature also addresses the importance of vision in organizations. In accordance with the teachings of Leithwood (2000), the principals have built their schools' visions as part of their transformational leadership traits. Identifying his trait theories, Bennis (2003) states that effective leaders must be able to lead others in creating a shared vision. Covey (1999) includes in his strategies for success "Begin with the end in mind" (p. 204). This, in reality, is asking leaders to have a vision. Burns (1978) uses the term transformational when discussing leaders who focus on change; without a vision, the path to change

is unclear. All three of the principal participants in this study have a clear voice, characterized by sense of self, sense of purpose, and self-confidence (Bennis, 2003). It is this shared vision and sense of purpose that has led to the collaborative cultures in these schools.

Data

> Schools are powerful organizations. Every day, across the United States, schools are impacting the lives of millions of children and the future of our very existence. Schools could, however, become even more powerfully efficient and effective learning organizations if data played a more active role in their daily existence. Data provide the power to. . .make good decisions, work intelligently, work effectively and efficiently, change things in better ways, know the impact of our hard work, help us prepare for the future, and know how to make our work benefit all children. (Bernhardt, 1999, p. xiii)

Schools in this system are expected to be data-driven, meaning the schools collect, analyze, and review data when making decisions. This data are not limited to student data, but rather are a combination of school demographics, parent satisfaction feedback, teacher feedback, standardized testing data, and local assessment data. The Educational Research Service (2002) urges schools to use data to make improvements in instruction, as well as provide a means for professional growth. AdvancED standards include the effective use of data as one of the seven standards for school improvement

(2006). Killon and Bellamy (2000) state that “Data are the fuel of reform” (p. 3). NSSE (2005) tasks schools to examine student performance and “identify gaps between current and expected student performance” (p. 4). Schmoker (1999) touts results (based on data) as the key to continuous school improvement. Reeves (2004) identified the ability to analyze data as an essential skill for principals. A wide variety of data review practices are in place in the schools of the three principals participating in this study. There is evidence in the artifacts, interviews, and observations that the principals are well-versed in the use of data to make decisions that are best for student achievement.

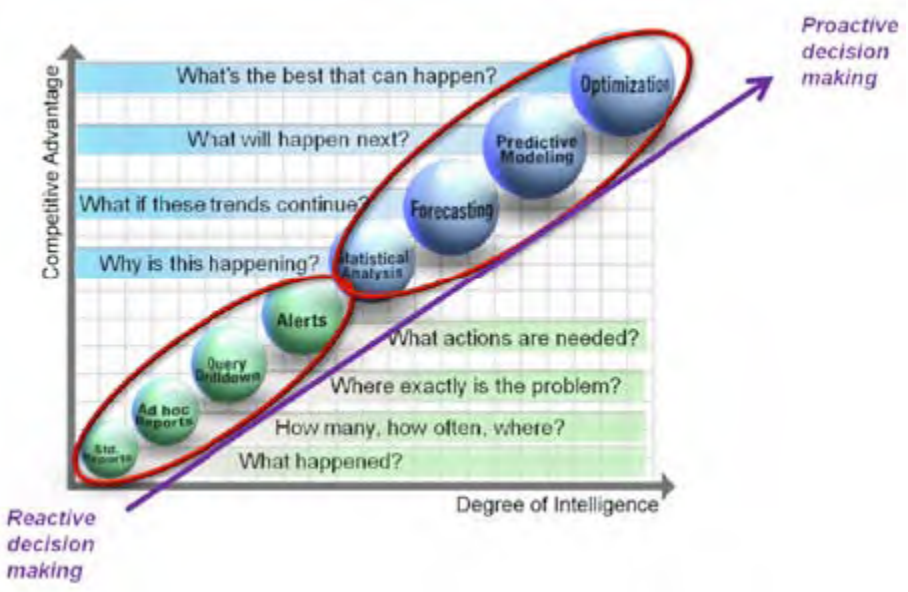

Figure 1: Progression from reactive decision making to proactive decision making, based on data (Mariani, 2008, p. 7)

As evident in Figure 1, it is not enough for principals to simply collect data in the forms of standardized and ad hoc reports. There must be inquiry as to where the problem lies and what actions will remedy the problem. It

appears that the principals participating in the study go beyond a simple review of data. Some examples of in-depth questions suggested by Mariani (2008) are:

1) Which students are at risk?
2) Which intervention strategies work best to help at-risk students stay in school?
3) Which students are not on track to graduate?
4) How can we best reallocate resources to schools?
5) How can we predict likely student test results early in the year and take steps to improve student success on an individual basis?
6) Which programs are working to improve student achievement and which are not?
7) How do we optimize resources and funds by forecasting student enrollment, population patterns, and student performance?
8) What is the best way to allocate resources toward a data-driven intervention rather than toward one based on instinct? (P. 7)

Only after implementing in-depth statistical analysis can school principals begin to forecast and predict the future trends and develop solutions to begin proactive measures for their schools. This collective inquiry (DuFour , Eaker, & DuFour, 2005) is essential for school growth.

The leadership literature confirms a strong need for data collection, analysis, and use. Deming (1987), who originally studied efficiency in industry, was a pioneer in the use of data to study organizational success. He urged organizations to focus on the outcome. Reeves (2004, 2006) suggests the use of data analysis to monitor implementations. By reviewing data, principals can share responsibility for success (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002a, 2002b) as well as learn from previous mistakes (Covey, 1999). Finally, Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002) charge leaders to use measurable standards.

Political Influence

The political influence on the schools of the three successful principals participating in this study is obvious. Political influence, as defined by Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002), limits authority and may limit resources. It also may produce struggles within/outside of the school setting. Without rational analysis, this political influence could have a negative effect. However, the three successful principals have become masterful at turning this political influence into an asset. For example, the military, rather than being seen as a controlling authority, have instead provided resources for the schools. Frequent communications with the School Liaison Officer give the schools an avenue for communication with the military command. Some of the more rigid influences, such as security measures, are in reality necessary precautions that ensure safety for the students and staff. Rather than working at odds with the teachers' union, the principals have worked with the faculty representative spokespersons (FRS) in making decisions, avoiding adversarial relationships.

Regular Joint Council Meetings with the FRS provide an opportunity for open communication and consensus on faculty issues. Monthly School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings provide parents a forum for expressing their concerns and asking questions about the schools. While less experienced leaders might see political influences as something that could be construed as negative, these three successful principals have used avenues of communication to turn the political influences into positive resources.

Examining the political aspects of leadership within the school setting, there is an underrepresentation of research. Spillane (2001, 2003, 2004) discusses distributed leadership as an interactive web that allows for multiple leaders and flexibility for change. This is evident in the military setting. Principals do get to make many day-to-day decisions in these overseas schools; however, much is dictated by district, area, or headquarters policies and initiatives. Some decisions are based on collaboration with the military. Therefore, leadership is distributed not only within the school, but within the organization as a whole. While Lambert (2003) suggests that all humans are capable of leadership, being successful as a principal in the schools that educate a large number of students whose parents are in the military requires special skills. Hersey and Blanchard's (1991, 1996) theories of situational leadership require leaders to match their behaviors to those of the people they are leading. To be politically appropriate in a wide variety of leadership situations, principals in these schools would find themselves at different times telling, participating, selling, or delegating. As Bolman and Deal (1997, 2002)

have pointed out, the political frame at times limits authority and resources, creates power struggles, and necessitates bargaining and negotiation.

Threads

Throughout all of these themes there are two common threads. The first of these is importance of people and the second is a specific focus on the students. People are at the center of relationships and partnerships. People create and are the fabric of a learning environment. People—not the building—make the school a success. People create and transmit the vision. Data are a reflection of people, are analyzed by people, and are used by people. Political influence is doled out and dealt with by people.

The fact that all of these efforts are focused on student success is a second thread. In schools, the focus of energy is the success of the students. Success cannot always be measured in standardized test scores or reading assessments. Success is something much more ethereal. Reviewing the mission statements of the schools whose principals participated in this study, we find that the elementary school seeks to “educate all children by providing a nurturing environment and standards-based curriculum dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of every child” (school website). The middle school vows to “create an environment where everyone experiences the adventure of learning at his or her highest level” (school website). The high school pledges to “equip all students to be conscientiously contributing citizens through a challenging curriculum and effective instruction” (school website) and the district promises to “promote student success—prevent student

failure" (district website). Squarely at the center of these mission statements are the students. Lest we get caught up in the day to day drama of life and leadership and change in education, let us stop and consider our focus: students.

Recommendations

Recommendations for District Level Administrators

Because there is a wide variety of talents and strengths among the principals in the district, I recommend that the district regularly provide time for principals to share best practices at district principal meetings (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Hord, 2004; Leithwood, 1994, 2000; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Senge, 1990, 1996). Block (2003) also suggests the importance of critical discussions and effective questioning, which could be part of this time for sharing. I also recommend that the district provide principals with meaningful staff development that is differentiated according to their needs (Fullan, 2006). In order for differentiation to occur, the district should conduct a needs assessment (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Topics that would be of interest to and benefit for principals might include leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Burns, 1978; Covey, 1999; Evans, 1996; Fullan, 1993, 1994, 2005a, 2008; Johnson, 1996; Kanter, 1985; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005); how to build learning communities (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2006; Education Research Service, 2002; Fullan, 2008; Hord, 2004; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Senge, 1990, 1996), effective use of

technology, using public relations to your schools advantage, or how to manage time effectively.

In order to continually grow, the district should develop a district-wide learning community, as suggested by Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004). These capacity-building districts possess the following common characteristics:

> 1) Leaders with a coherent driving conceptualization, 2) A collective moral purpose, 3) The structure and roles most effective for developing capacity-building, 4) Leadership and capacity-building for those in key roles, 5) Lateral capacity-building, 6) Deep learning, 7) Productive conflict, 8) Demanding cultures, 9) External partners, 10) Growing financial investment. (p. 46)

Similarly, Fullan (2008) promotes the integration of "individual and organizational development (p. 1). He believes that in order to effect significant breakthrough, both individuals and the system must be transformed simultaneously. Fullan (2008) posits, "Learning is not workshops and courses and strategic retreats. It is not school improvement plans or individual leadership development. These are inputs. Rather, learning is developing the organization, day after day, within the culture" (p. 4).

While the district has leaders with vision, perhaps this vision or conceptualization needs to be further refined and published to a broader

audience of stakeholders. The addition of the district vision to the district website could accomplish this in part. Secondly, all district employees, regardless of duties, need to be exposed to the vision of the district. This would effect continuity and build leadership capacity. Those in key roles could meet in a forum to discuss the mission, vision, and culture of the district as a learning community, recognizing the many key players at the district level make valuable contributions. While conflict is unavoidable at the district level as well as in meetings of district principals, productive conflict may serve to produce better ways of conducting the business of educating all children in the district. I interpret “Establishing a demanding culture” as having high expectations, something that is always at the forefront in this system as a whole. The system’s Community Strategic Plan serves as a vehicle for defining these high expectations. Just as the district expects schools to have partners, we, too, as a district would do well to establish partnerships. The district has partnerships with the military communities and neighboring German schools, but further investigation of partnerships could lead to additional support. As a government agency, the district cannot legally go to outside sources for financial support. However, the district can and does provide logistical support for the schools, including many renovation and construction projects, funding for after-school activities, and specialist support (e.g., math coaches, reading coaches, school improvement liaison, generalist, educational technologist, instructional technologist).

Another recommendation based on my observations and found in the work of Elmore (2004) is that the district help facilitate reduction in the isolation of a principal's work, making it more open to observation and feedback. In order for this to occur, there has to be mutual respect and trust between the principals and the district administrators. The district is certainly moving in this direction in that district administrators are in the schools on a routine basis, providing support and guidance for the principals. In 2008, all three district level administrators were new in their roles; trust and collegiality develops over time.

Recommendations for Principals

Principals should establish a clear vision and communicate it regularly to all stakeholders (Bennis, 2003; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, 2000; Senge, 1990). Principals should use data to make decisions (Bolman & Deal, 1997, 2002; Deming, 1987; Reeves, 2004, 2006; Schmoker, 1999), but these data should be shared with the faculty (and parents/students when appropriate) to increase buy-in for those decisions. Principals should use the in-depth data analysis questions proposed by Mariani (2008, p. 7) to guide proactive decision making. They should develop support networks and confidante relationships with other principals (Educational Research Service, 2002; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002a, 2002b; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Senge, 1990, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992; Spillane, 2001, 2003, 2004). In order to meet the daily demands and stress of the life of a principal, they must find innovative ways to nourish their souls and

carve out time for themselves. Principals should value the unique wisdom and perspective each teacher, student, and parent brings to the community, creating an inclusive learning community that learns and grows together. Valuing relationships and forming partnerships will only make the school leadership stronger; leadership does not occur in isolation. Principals should use political influence and public relations to their advantage (Bolman & Deal, 1997, 2002). Finally, principals should lead with integrity, building trust and reputation as assets (Bennis, 2003; Evans, 1996; Sosik & Dionne, 1997; Thorton, 2006).

Recommendations for Further Studies

Recommendations for further studies include the effects of deployment on school employees in schools educating a large number of children with military parents, the effects of stress on principal health, how to increase faculty buy-in in the school improvement process, and how to effectively share data with parents and teachers. I would also recommend a study of Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) and their effectiveness in genuine professional growth. An exploration of military partnerships with schools could produce valuable information as well. School improvement is certainly a broad area to study because it involves nearly all aspects of schools and how best to promote student success. Although there has been a long history of research in this area, we still have much to learn.

Summary

This study began with a seemingly simple research question, “How do successful principals lead school improvement in overseas schools educating a large number of children with military parents?” In an effort to add to the body of knowledge on this topic, artifacts including school improvement plans, agendas from professional development days, faculty meetings, and School Improvement Leadership Team meetings were collected from three successful principals within one district. The participating principals and the district superintendent participated in interviews. I observed each principal in his/her role as leader on at least two separate occasions. During interviews and observations, I applied Bolman and Deal’s (1997, 2002) framework as the theoretical structure, analyzing human resource, structure, symbols, and political influences. By triangulating data I discovered effective school improvement leadership themes in these participating schools; these six themes are relationships, partnerships, learning environment, vision, data, and political influence. Throughout the themes, a common thread of people was recognized. The students specifically were the focus of the energies of the successful principals participating in this study. Reflecting on the themes and threads of the study, I have presented selected recommendations for both principals and district leadership, as well as ideas for future studies.

In comparing the findings of this study to the literature, it is apparent why so many different models of leadership, change, and school improvement have evolved. These are complex issues and one model does not fit all situations—

or in this case—all schools. There are so many facets that make up a school's culture; among these are personalities and qualifications of staff members, influence of the teachers' union, socio-economic composition and age range of the student body, principal's vision and leadership style, physical condition/appearance of the school building, funding, parental support, community partnerships, and student achievement data. In this study, the authority of the military as a political influence is a major factor in leadership. To be a successful and effective within this school system, the principals must take the readily provided military structure and work within it. They cannot ignore the leadership from above—both that of the system headquarters and that of the military leadership. One of the principals participating in this study phrased her philosophy quite simply, "I meet people where they are." Similarly, to be successful each principal must learn to objectively survey his/her school and "meet people where they are." The key to success is to meet them where they are, but not leave them there. After all, leadership is "articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished" (Richards & Engle, 1986, p. 206).

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for the Superintendent of Schools

1. How long have you been a superintendent?

2. How long have you been the superintendent of this district?

3. Were you a principal prior to being a superintendent?

4. What expectations do you have of principals as leaders of school improvement?

5. What, if any, portions of the principals' performance appraisals relate to their leadership in school improvement?

6. Is there any particular model of school improvement that you endorse?

7. When you visit a school, what evidence do you look for in relationship to effective school improvement leadership?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Successful Principals in the Selected District

Human Resource Frame

1. Describe how you work with people.
2. Describe how you work with people who have difficulties.
3. Describe how you influence others to change.
4. Describe how you motivate people.
5. What formal/informal education best prepared you for your job as a principal?

Structural Frame

1. What systems and structures influence the culture of your school?
2. How do these systems have positive and negative effects on your school?
3. What do you do at the school level to ensure you have performance-driven management systems in effect?
4. Does your school vision affect your leadership?
5. What partnerships help promote student success at your school?

Symbolic Frame

1. Describe how symbolism is used in your school environment.
2. What symbols have you used to promote ideals/values in your school?

Political Frame

1. How do school system politics influence the way you lead your school?
2. How do politics influence school/community climate?
3. How do school-level politics affect school climate?

Miscellaneous

1. How is your school preparing students for the future?
2. What special things does your school do in order to promote highest student achievement?

Appendix C

Principal Observation Form
Setting:

Principal _____ Observation # _____ Date: Time:				
Human Relations Frame	Symbolic Frame	Political Frame	Structural Frame	Observer Comments:

Appendix D

Elementary School System-wide Assessment Data
Based on *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition
Grades 3-5
Selected Elementary School's Scores: Community Strategic Plan 2006-2008

Grade	Quartile Percents	Reading			Language Arts			Mathematics			Science			Social Studies		
		2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
3	1st	28.6	35.1	26.5	31.2	29.8	28.8	29.3	29.2	29.8	34.8	35.5	37.4	31.2	37.1	24.1
3	2nd	33.1	29.1	33.3	39.6	35.8	35.6	36.3	29.9	36.6	32.9	34.2	26.7	32.5	27.8	36.8
3	1st & 2nd	61.7	64.2	59.8	70.8	65.6	64.4	65.6	59.1	66.4	67.7	69.7	64.1	63.7	64.9	60.9
3	4th	12.3	13.2	16.7	7.8	10.6	13.6	10.2	11.0	11.5	7.1	9.9	9.2	9.1	12.6	10.5
4	1st	36.0	39.5	37.9	33.5	42.9	32.0	37.4	42.8	36.2	29.4	45.6	41.2	41.0	55.1	43.8
4	2nd	33.5	25.4	28.8	28.6	31.3	32.7	35.0	34.2	30.9	38.8	25.9	26.1	32.3	24.5	32.7
4	1st & 2nd	69.5	64.9	66.7	62.1	74.2	64.7	72.4	77.0	67.1	68.2	71.5	67.3	73.3	79.6	76.5
4	4th	10.6	6.1	9.2	9.9	7.5	10.5	8.0	7.9	11.2	10.6	8.8	7.2	5.6	4.8	5.9
5	1st	43.5	41.1	46.9	37.9	35.4	46.2	42.1	37.9	44.1	44.4	39.0	44.1	38.3	29.1	49.7
5	2nd	27.3	30.4	29.7	36.0	35.4	28.3	26.8	33.5	31.7	27.8	30.8	32.4	40.7	40.5	27.6
5	1st & 2nd	70.8	71.5	76.6	73.9	70.8	74.5	68.9	71.4	75.8	72.2	69.8	76.5	79.0	69.6	77.3
5	4th	6.2	9.5	6.9	5.0	11.4	5.5	10.4	10.6	7.6	8.6	10.7	6.9	5.6	7.0	5.5

Shaded Areas Meet the System-wide Benchmark
CSP Benchmarks: >75% in top two quarters combined; <7% in the bottom quartile

Appendix E

Middle School System-wide Assessment Data
Based on *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition
Grades 6-8

Selected Middle School's Scores: Community Strategic Plan 2006-2008																
Grade	**Quartile Percents**	Reading			Language Arts			Mathematics			Science			Social Studies		
		2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
6	1st	29.5	18.1	24.0	29.5	25.0	31.0	27.9	29.1	25.5	32.0	23.3	29.4	31.1	37.1	26.7
6	2nd	33.6	38.8	43.0	30.3	33.6	37.0	34.4	30.8	30.4	33.6	35.3	31.4	24.6	30.2	31.7
6	1st & 2nd	63.1	56.9	67.0	59.8	58.6	68.0	62.3	59.9	55.9	65.6	58.6	60.8	55.7	67.3	58.4
6	4th	11.5	15.5	6.0	8.2	14.7	4.0	12.1	13.7	19.6	12.3	13.8	9.8	19.7	12.1	9.9
7	1st	22.4	22.5	21.0	37.4	35.1	32.8	26.9	27.7	31.9	27.1	21.8	27.7	28.0	19.8	27.7
7	2nd	36.4	33.3	37.8	27.1	31.5	26.9	18.7	36.6	28.6	28.0	37.3	36.1	24.3	42.3	33.6
7	1st & 2nd	58.8	55.8	58.8	64.5	66.6	59.7	45.6	64.3	60.5	55.1	59.1	63.8	52.3	62.1	61.3
7	4th	16.8	16.2	17.6	13.1	9.9	13.4	17.6	13.4	21.0	17.8	11.8	16.0	16.8	9.9	11.8
8	1st	38.7	34.6	38.4	42.3	35.6	36.0	32.4	33.7	38.4	28.8	26.9	30.6	30.6	31.7	28.9
8	2nd	36.9	28.8	38.4	31.5	20.2	30.2	34.2	29.8	32.6	36.9	38.5	35.3	34.2	38.5	44.6
8	1st & 2nd	75.6	63.4	76.8	73.8	55.8	66.2	66.6	63.5	71.0	65.7	65.4	65.9	64.8	70.2	73.5
8	4th	7.2	10.6	5.8	7.2	10.6	5.8	9.0	11.5	4.7	13.5	10.6	9.4	6.3	10.6	3.6

Shaded Areas Meet the System-wide Benchmark
CSP Benchmarks: >75% in top two quarters combined; <7% in the bottom quartile

Appendix F

High School System-wide Assessment Data
Based on *TerraNova*, Multiple Assessments, Second Edition

Selected High School's Scores: Community Strategic Plan 2006-2008

Grade	Quartile Percents	Reading			Language Arts			Mathematics			Science			Social Studies		
		2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
9	1st	39.1	39.8	37.5	35.6	35.4	23.9	31.0	34.5	31.3	36.4	28.7	33.7	31.8	33.3	37.1
9	2nd	34.5	35.4	36.4	23.0	38.1	43.2	26.4	27.6	33.7	30.7	39.1	36.0	38.6	23.7	27.0
9	1st & 2nd	73.6	75.2	73.9	58.6	73.5	67.1	57.4	62.1	65.0	67.1	67.8	69.7	70.4	57.0	64.1
9	4th	3.4	9.7	5.7	6.9	8.8	12.5	14.8	17.2	14.6	10.2	11.3	6.7	13.6	13.2	9.0
10	1st	34.2	38.3	39.5	45.6	40.0	49.4	40.5	44.3	33.3	40.5	39.3	25.9	30.4	24.6	24.7
10	2nd	44.3	43.3	46.9	31.6	36.7	38.3	30.4	27.9	39.5	24.1	32.8	42.0	36.7	39.3	51.9
10	1st & 2nd	78.5	81.6	86.4	77.2	76.7	87.7	70.9	72.2	72.8	64.6	72.1	67.9	67.1	63.9	76.6
10	4th	8.9	1.7	1.2	6.3	8.3	3.7	6.3	9.8	4.9	12.7	6.6	4.9	8.9	6.6	3.7
11	1st	47.7	37.3	39.0	41.5	33.9	32.2	36.9	29.0	32.2	33.8	27.9	30.5	39.1	36.1	28.8
11	2nd	38.5	40.7	37.3	32.3	35.6	25.4	26.2	30.6	30.5	27.7	36.1	22.0	40.6	31.1	30.5
11	1st & 2nd	86.2	78.0	76.3	73.8	69.5	57.6	63.1	59.6	62.7	61.5	64.0	52.5	79.7	67.2	59.3
11	4th	3.1	1.7	8.5	7.7	10.2	8.5	9.2	22.6	18.6	9.2	13.1	10.2	4.7	8.2	10.2

Shaded Areas Meet the System-wide Benchmark
CSP Benchmarks: >75% in top two quarters combined; <7% in the bottom quartile

Appendix G: Interview Data, Human Resource Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal	District Superintendent
Enjoys opportunity for reflection	**Traits:**	Intimate level	
Find common ground for conversations	Compassionate	Make a connection	Involved faculty
Works with other informally	Nice	Personal interest	School improvement=
Is available and approachable	Caring	Interest in their success	Increased student achievement
Is responsive	Positive	Difficulty: common ground	Student data is a source of personal satisfaction/dissatisfaction
Differentiates difficulties:	Validate people	Not out to "get" anyone	
Personal or professional?	Meet people where they are	Spend time and effort to support success of faculty	Principals should possess leadership skills
Personal		Be unthreatening	Schools are professional learning communities
Applies Covey's model to conflict	Use Friday reflections for faculty	Set high expectations	Schools have cultures of high expectations
"First things first."	Leave hand-written notes	Lead by example; model what you expect	Principals are involved in SIP, but not primary movers
Maslow: safe environment	Assesses difficulty in conflict	Carve out time for yourself	Principal sets the framework
Professional	Treat people fairly	Supply opportunity to observe other teachers	Principal motivates
Support	Brainstorms w/people	Support teachers networking	Principal encourages and celebrates
Solve it together	Listen	Offer training opportunities	Principal is the leader for effective instruction
Put emotions on the table	Empathize	Differentiate motivation; intrinsic rewards	Principal is responsible for leadership/planning
Recognize discomfort	Exercise patience	Trusted colleague	
Have a witness		Time management	
Method for change influence:		**Job prep:**	
Manipulation		Facilities management course	
Lobbying by others		Mentors explained rationale for decisions	
Flattery (make them think it	**Job prep:**	Mentors explained thought processes	
was their idea)	On the job	Broader perspective of administrator	
Job prep:	Leaders are born	Split teaching/admin. position--empathy	
Janitor-learned humility		Mentorship	

Appendix H: Interview Data, Structural Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal	District Superintendent
	Structures:	**Physical environment:**	Goals are attainable, measurable
School culture:	Supervision of faculty	Improved climate; Renovations	There is increasingly more sophistication and challenge
Celebrations are frequent	Supervision of office staff	Attractive environment	Pre/interim/post assessments produce useable data
Formal/informal get-togethers	Supervision of clubs/organizations	Improvements influenced staff/community view of school	Management systems are in Place in each school
to encourage collegiality	Management system is in place	**School culture:**	
Rituals	No assistant principal	High office staff expectations: behavior, dress,	
Open door informality	Positive school climate	Improved customer service	School Improvement model=
Casual dress		Office staff: initial impression of school	AdvancED and NCA
Approachable		Warm greeting, clean, neat, professional office	Programs are continuously evaluated
		Teamwork: admin., teachers, staff	SIP is a continuous process
		Support risk-taking; experimentation	School maintains documentation of SIP
		Improve attendance on Staff Development days	evidence, data, work samples
		Value input of others	
		Promote your vision	
		Celebrate success	
		Provide time for teachers to prepare and work with kids	
		Meetings: meaningful and regular	
Data: indicative of student/teacher		Instructional leaders, faculty, dept., SILT, SST	Schools are organized for performance
performance	Performance-driven	SST: focus on at-risk students; monitor/intervene	

Appendix H: Interview Data, Structural Frame, Continued

Vision: An open, friendly, music/art-filled school; people are celebrated for contributions; high test scores are a function of what we are doing

Solid **change** formula:

What works/challenges/next steps

Change occurs over time

Include everyone: fingerprints on process

It's a hard climb

Be responsive to needs of individuals

Partnerships:

Military

Team sports

Monitoring playground

Community

Parent tutors in math/reading

Volunteers, not just visitors

Vision: We're on the road to success, no mater what it takes.

Focus on kids

Partnerships:

Military

Dances, mentors, sports

Lunchroom supervision

Youth Services

Homework club

Gymnastics, art, music

Vision: a safe, clean learning environment where we focus on the positive

Student support structures:

Tues/Thurs scholars, flexible seminars, mentors,

GradeSpeed

Review school data often

Review individual student data

Acknowledge discomfort with change

Make changes gradually

Influence, don't force, change

Partnerships: *Military unit*

College night, sports, homecoming, graduation

School Liaison Officer

School/Home/Community

Enlist community support

Persistent, positive PR; build good reputation

Communication with parents improved

Vision: Success for all students

Appendix I: Interview Data, Symbolic Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal	District Superintendent
School mascot: Bobcat=friendly/happy	School mascot:	School mascot: Bison=pride	American flag
Color: blue notes; positive	Mustang=strength	Large mascot sculpture	Conference table in office
Music: sets moods; captures attention		Spirit wear	
Lights: highlight student work		In display case	
Lobby: welcoming		On car decals	
TV: student activities/projects		Colors: purple and gold	
Homey furnishings: tablecloth, plants, rug		Tiles in main hallway	
School appearance; welcoming, calming, Inviting		Throughout building	
Invitational education=inviting environment		Spirit wear	

Appendix J: Interview Data, Political Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal	District Superintendent
First names; no titles	**Military:**	**Military:**	District is here to support schools
Some like more formality	Affects climate of school	Mutual support of military command	
Performance-driven management	Pressure on students (deployments)	Empathy: military mission comes first	
people expect good results	Kids are resilient	Active voice in community; participate	
Sharing data can increase level of concern;	Transient families	**District Office:**	
motivate teachers	Full staffing due to command influence	Who you know=support at higher levels	
Be responsive to needs of system	**Faculty:**	Wheeling and dealing; informal conversations	
Know the rules and regulations	In/out groups dynamics	Prepared for unexpected funding; short deadlines	
Support the greater good of the organization	Teachers' union-work cooperatively	Keep superiors informed; they don't like surprises	
Recognize the influence of military restructuring		Ethics: do everything above-board	
Recognize instability	**Parents:**	communicate regularly	
Uncertainty: pending school closures	School Advisory Council (SAC)	**Colleagues:**	
Share information or lack thereof		Know the styles of colleagues as well as superiors	
Be transparent with information	**Area Office**: weekly directives	Network	
Use rumors to advantage; plant positive info		Practice mutual respect	
		No hidden agendas or manipulation	

Appendix K: Interview Data, Preparing Students for the Future

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal	District Superintendent
This is the real world	Creative thinking	**Beyond the Bison Years Program:**	
Give students skills for now.	Gifted Education	College prep	
Employ project-based learning	Accelerated Reading	Independent living topics	
appropriate for kids' environment	Accelerated Math	Financial support for college	
	Star Math	**Transitions:**	
	Read 180	College night	
	AVID	AVID	
	Algebra 1 for eighth graders	Student to student orientation for new students	
		ASVAB (student vocational aptitude test)	
		My Road program (transition planning)	
		Other extras for students:	
		Food at school events	
		Free, healthy snacks available in office	
		Safe, clean environment	
		Low PTR	
		Student leadership opportunities	
		Student Council	
		Class officers	
		Peer tutoring	
		JROTC	
	Vocational classes:	**Vocational classes:**	
	Video production classes	Cosmetology, JROTC, Video Production, Computer Systems repairs, Computer Aided Design	
	Technology classes		
		Curriculum based on standards	
Student recognition program	**Student recognition program**	**Student recognition program**	
Star Day Assemblies	Awards ceremonies	Awards ceremonies	
Exemplary work wall (rubric)		Academic competitions	
Reward=appreciation of work		National Honor Society	

Appendix L: Observation Data, Human Resource Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
SILT Meeting	**Faculty Meeting**	**Faculty Meeting**
Agenda	Agenda emailed and printed to conserve time	Agenda emailed and printed
Announced	Welcoming new staff member	Provisions made for absent members
Snacks available	No Assistant Principal	Snacks available
Relaxed Atmosphere	Showed concern for colleagues	Showed concern for colleagues
Concern for internal customer service	Celebrated success	Celebrated success
School climate addressed	Confidentiality addressed	
	Deployment/Reintegration addressed	Deployment/Reintegration addressed
Encouraged sharing of ideas	Encouraged sharing of ideas	Encouraged sharing of ideas
Took command of group	Took command of group	Took command of group
	Discussed importance of being compassionate and nice	GradeSpeed allows communication with parents
	Transitions	
	Salute wall	
	Confidentiality addressed	
Encouraged communication	Encouraged communication	Encouraged communication
Professional Development Day:	**Assembly:**	**Meeting: SST**
Invite parents	Invite Parents; designate VIP seating	Team membership established
Offer a variety for adult choices	Photo commemorating student success	Confidentiality addressed
Include fitness opportunities	Celebrating student success and diversity	Brainstormed support tactics: at-risk students
Include healthy, relaxed lunch	Inspirational; challenging	Modeled genuine concerns for students
Allow for shared decision making	Modeled appropriate behavior; set behavior norms	
Allow time for networking with colleagues	**General Comments:**	
	"You are Valued" poster at entry	
Student support teams	Character education themes throughout	
General Comments:	Visitor log book (safety)	**General Comments:**
Visitor log book (safety)	School is a community haven	Visitor log book (safety)
Parent involvement--room designated	Parent involvement—PTSA	Parent involvement--PTSA
Showed appreciation for staff	Showed appreciation for staff	Showed appreciation for staff

Appendix M: Observation Data, Structural Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
SILT Meeting:	**Faculty Meeting:**	**Faculty Meeting:**
Agenda	Set purpose for meeting--staff development	Shared leadership
Objectives	and curriculum engagement	Input for agenda collected in advance
Team Members established	Agenda printed and distributed	Agenda printed and distributed
Planning for future professional development	Protection of teaching time	Focuses on "big ticket items"
Keeps the group on task	Established end time for meeting	Established end time for meeting
Need for accountability and documentation of efforts	Announced new cleaning contract	Does not repeat items for late-comers
Shared leadership	Shared leadership	Support of School Improvement Plan--teacher conference
Modeled effective use of data	Modeled effective use of data	Modeled effective use of data
Professional Development Day:		Encouraged parents as partners in education
Establish an agenda--variety of activities	**Assembly:**	**Teacher Observation:**
Hands-on; train for interventions	Modeled a school-wide math intervention	Observations occur regularly
Required SIP training	Program modeled celebration of diversity	Safety light installed
Review of mission statement and goals	Program was inclusive	**SST Meeting:**
Share expertise of staff and district personnel	Announced new ZAP program	Printed agenda
Review assessment of progress toward goals	Celebrated student success	Established committee
Include curriculum sessions	Featured school musicians, teachers, counselor	Checklist of established interventions for at-risk students
Include personnel issues	Encouraged parents as partners in education	Encouraged parents as partners in education
Student support teams		
Time for teacher learning		
Encouraged parents as partners in education		
General Comments:	**General Comments:**	**General Comments:**
Community Strategic Plan influence	Community Strategic Plan influence	Community Strategic Plan influence
AdvancED Standards	AdvancED Standards	AdvancED Standards
System Curriculum Standards	System Curriculum Standards	System Curriculum Standards
Chain of command/communication structure posted	Chain of command/communication structure posted	Chain of command/communication structure posted
Featured leaders' vision of school	Featured leader's vision of school	Featured leader's vision of school

Appendix N: Observation Data, Symbolic Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
SILT Meeting:	**Faculty Meeting:**	**Faculty Meetings:**
Standing at Front--in charge	Red Ribbon Week	Red Ribbon Week
Graphic organizers for topics		Support of military through CFC
Round table for discussions		Homecoming king/queen applaud student leadership
Professional Development Day:	**Assembly:**	**Teacher Conference:**
Balanced variety in day symbolizes meeting a variety of human needs	Dr. Seuss	"Strive for Five" t-shirts
	Stage setting: dignity	American flag in office
	Mustangs on wall	**SST Meeting:**
	Public recognition: certificate/reward	Table setting for encouraging conversation
		Secluded conference room for privacy
General Comments:	**General Comments:**	**General Comments:**
Relaxed atmosphere	American and state flags	Flower pots
Music	Kid-friendly clothing	Fresh paint
Lights		Mascot
Student art		Motivational thought of the week
Welcoming décor		Display case: memorabilia
Fresh paint		New blinds
Chain of command photos	Chain of command photos	Chain of command photos

Appendix O: Observation Data, Political Frame

Elementary School Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
Meetings:	**Meetings:**	**Meetings:**
Recognizing customer base is military	Community support of programs	Military group--homecoming
Community support of school programs	Organized school support of CFC	Community support of Beyond the Bison Year program
	Union meeting follows	Organized school support of CFC
Professional Development Day:	**Assembly:**	Democratic mock elections
Network with parents	Pledge of Allegiance recited	Union meeting follows
Complete required personnel training	National Anthem played	Homecoming will include Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem
Military parents invited		Political debate on CCT
General Comments:	**General Comments:**	**General Comments:**
Security of setting	Security of setting	Security of setting
Military setting	Military setting	Military setting
Chain of command/communication structure	Chain of command/communication structure	Chain of command/communication
Government requirements: No Fear, Anti-Terrorism, EEO training	Government requirements: No Fear, Anti-Terrorism, EEO training	Government requirements: No Fear, Anti-Terrorism, EEO training
Safety issues addressed	Safety issues addressed	Safety issues addressed
Use of public relations	Use of public relations	Use of public relations
Government contract: cleaning	Government contract: cleaning	Government contract: cleaning